No. 1

THE JOURNAL OF FICTIONAL REALITY

OMNIVERSE

$1.50

Featuring

"The SUPERMAN and BATMAN of THREE WORLDS!"

Plus "DOES HOWARD the DUCK KNOW UNCLE $CROOGE?"

POPLASKI

omniverse

the journal of fictional reality

COVER: **"Superman and Batman of Three Worlds** 1
Pete Poplaski

EDITORIAL : **Of Omniversal Concern** 2
Mark Gruenwald

HOWARD THE DUCK NEVER READ THE DUCKBURG CHRONICLE 3
Bob Rodi
Art by Neal Pozner

SIZING UP THE MICRO WORLDS 7
Martin Berkenwald
Art by Jerry Ordway

FORUM: **The Imagination Fallacy** 10
Dean Mullaney

Ethereality, Divergence, Diversifals 12
Harry Broertjes

The Reflection/Echo Effect 14
Sergio Andrade
Art by Jim Booras

CASE STUDIES: SCIENCE FICTION 16
David Truesdale
Art by Dorothy Donohue

A REALITY LIMERICK 18
Kim Thompson
Art by Robert Fuller

CASE STUDIES: COMICS 19
Mark Gruenwald

REALITY SPOTLIGHT ON THE FLASH 24
Dean Mullaney
Art by Dennis Jensen

PHENOMENAL RELATIONSHIPS AMONG DC's REALITY LINES 32
Mark Gruenwald
Art by Rich Bruning

The Divergent Factor Between Earths -One and -Two
Godwar and the Great Disaster
In Search of the Super-Sons Tangent

MARVEL OMNIPOTENTS AND OMNIVERSAL AWARENESS 37
Frank Lovece
Art by Tom Sciacca

BACK COVER: **"The Marvel Omnipotents"** 44
Willie Blyberg

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# of Omniversal concern

Welcome to **OMNIVERSE**. The publication in your hands is like no other. It is the first magazine ever to be devoted solely to the exploration of Fictional Reality in its many depictions in contemporary literature.

The word "omniverse" is used in my **TREATISE ON REALITY IN COMIC LITERATURE** (popularly called "**TORICL**") to refer to the continuum of all universes, the space/time matrix that comprises all alternate realms of reality.[1] The appropriateness of this as a title should become clear with even a glance at our contents page. In times to come, we hope to broaden our scope and place all forms of fiction under scrutiny. Til then, **OMNIVERSE** will emphasize comic books over non-pictoral prose, due to the editors' background in comicology.

OMNIVERSE will examine comic books not as an **artform** (discussing artistic styles, the narrative tradition, or the aesthetics of the medium), nor as **literature** (discussing literary values, thematic statements, or the role of modern mythology). **OMNIVERSE** will treat comics as a **medium of ideas**, presenting speculations on phenomena, science, metaphysics — the whole gamut of reality — as it is depicted in comics.

OMNIVERSE was conceived while distributing **TORICL** at the 1976 New York Comic Art Convention. Gratified by the response the volume was generating, I felt I was not mistaken in recognizing the need for a work of its nature. This need was to take the comics' sketchy premises pertaining to parallel dimensions and time travel to their logical conclusions and synthesize a coherent whole. Those who bought **TORICL** were filled with questions on the order of "How about that **Superman** story where he did such and such? How does that fit in?" Many stories were brought to my attention that escaped mention in the treatise because I never came across the tale in my near-two decades of comic reading, or I had considered it superfluous since I could not include everything. Many ideas were brought forth as well, some that corroborated and some that challenged my own.

In the course of exchanging story reminiscences and ideas with fellow comicologists, it occurred to me that there ought to be a place where such discussion can be carried on in print for the benefit of a greater audience. The myriad aspects of Fictional Reality had only been surveyed in **TORICL**. The subject is so vast that it would take a multitude of minds to explore it thoroughly. And so the word was spread that a magazine about reality was being assembled. Articles and artwork were solicited from among comic fankind's top writers and illustrators. Their work on the following pages is, in the opinion of your editors, one of the finest collections of material to appear in a single fan publication to date. Of course, we have even greater expectations for our next issue, when the ranks of Fictional Realists will have expanded beyond the purchasers of **TORICL**'s limited first edition.[2]

As both the author of the first major paper about the theoretical nature of Fictional Reality and the editor of **OMNIVERSE**, the question may be raised whether I will impose one point of view — my own — on all the writing contained in these pages. I do not intend to. **OMNIVERSE** shall be a place for clarifying and contesting aspects of the Omniversal Theory presented in **TORICL**, as well as for presenting conflicting new reality theories. As the most definitive work on the subject to date, **TORICL** will serve to provide the basic vocabulary and the "knowns" that most articles will proceed from. Without such a frame of reference, it would be necessary to backtrack and establish basics in the context of every article.

Not all of **OMNIVERSE** will be devoted to "hard-core" theory. That sort of material will be the focus of the **Forum** section. Most of **OMNIVERSE** will be about things not theories. Topics of discussion in this and future issues include "Funny Animal" Realities, Atlantis on the Various Earths, The Lives and Times of **Doctor Doom**, The Phantom Zone, Microscopic Worlds, and Afterlife in the Comics. As one can see, **OMNIVERSE** will not just concern itself with parallel dimensions and time travel, but the reality of the fictional worlds themselves — their science, natural laws, interesting phenomena, even sociology. Regular features besides **Forum** include **Case Studies: Comics** and **Case Studies: Science Fiction**, columns that examine current stories, and **Reality Spotlight**, surveying an entire comic book series for its treatment of reality. Our ultimate goal is to touch upon **every** story in comics and science fiction that pertains to Fictional Reality.

True realists may cast a jaundiced eye at the idea of devoting a whole magazine to Fictional Reality. Shouldn't everyday reality be enough to concern one's self with? they say. They have a point. But since Fictional Reality exists — perhaps as no more than a mental construct — it is a subject deserving of study. And since that which we call "real" may well be someone else's fiction, perhaps the study of Fictional Reality may give some insight into our personal reality. At worst, the pursuit that this publication is dedicated to is a harmless[3] if unusual mental exercise.

Fictional Reality is not a topic that a majority of comics and science fiction readers will be concerned with, for it deals with these literary forms not merely on the level of entertainment, but on the level of ideas. If you look for more in your comic/science fiction reading than a few minutes/hours of escapist pleasure, **OMNIVERSE** is meant for you.

MG

1. To my knowledge, I coined the word "omniverse" from its obvious Latin roots.

2. Although **TORICL** will not go into a second edition for years to come, the substance of the Omniversal Theory can be found in **A PRIMER ON REALITY IN COMIC BOOKS**, co-authored by the editor and his father, available from Alternity.

3. Yes, this is a value judgment.

Howard the Duck was introduced to the Marvel Universe as a sort of archetypal Disney-style "funny animal" in a **Man-Thing** story[1] involving characters from various Reality Lines. However, the possibility that **Howard** actually came from a Disney Reality, and perhaps read about **$crooge McDuck** in the newspapers, seems remote.

The only indication that **Howard** might be a native of a Disney-Earth is that he is a duck. We have no reason to assume that there is just one "cartoon character" Reality, anymore than there is just one "human being" Reality. Evidence to the contrary leads us to believe that **Howard**'s Reality Line is perhaps a parallel of Earth-M (Marvel-Earth), or more probably, in a Primary System of its own, while Disney-Earth is in a Primary System all **its** own.

To discover what possible parallels there may exist between these three Reality Lines, let us first look at some of the "knowns" about **Howard the Duck**'s home world:

1. **Howard**'s world has no human beings; witness **Howard**'s continuous reference to "hairless apes."
2. Although it has never been definitely stated, **Howard**'s world seems to have a variety of intelligent anthropomorphic animal species.[2]
3. **Howard**'s world has an economic system and currency like that of Earth-M (and Earth-Real).[3]
4. **Howard**'s world is firmly entrenched in a time era comparable to Earth-M's (and Earth-Real's) 1970's, with scholastic aptitude tests, folk music, and an unemployment problem.[4]
5. **Howard**'s world has a political and social system similar to that of Earth-M to judge by how easily he adapted to life and politics.
6. Just as on Earth-M, there is magic on **Howard**'s world; in one episode Howard wondered how a city can be named "Cleveland" and "not be ruled by demons."[5]

Howard's Reality is similar to Earth-M in that it, too, seems to be consistent in its scientific and magical make-up, while on Earth-Disney, science and magic run wild. However, if **Howard's** world is to be proven in the same Primary System as Earth-M, a Divergent Factor must be found, and naturally, this would involve examining the evolutionary ages of both worlds.

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1. **FEAR** No. 19/**MAN-THING** No. 1.
2. On p. 18 of **FEAR** No. 19 is a panel depicting other anthropomorphic animals wearing clothing — **dogs, mice and ducks.**
3. **GIANT-SIZE MAN-THING** No. 4 depicts **Howard** with a dollar bill identical to Earth-M's except that there is a duck's face on it instead of George Washington's.
4. **HOWARD THE DUCK** No. 13, p. 11.
5. **GIANT-SIZE MAN-THING** No. 4, p. 46.

It's still possible; after all, look what happened to the dominant life form on Earth after the disaster depicted in **KAMANDI**, or maybe someone like the **High Evolutionary** purposefully diverted evolution on one Reality Line as an experiment.[6]

If we define an "Earth" as a Reality Line on which human beings are native, **Howard the Duck**'s Reality Line is not an "Earth." Therefore, we can conclude that Earth-M and **Howard**'s Reality Line are probably in their own respective Primary Systems.

Although **Howard's** world may resemble Earth-Disney superficially, Earth-Disney is much different from **Howard**'s home world. On Earth-Disney, physical laws are governed by both science and magic. Time periods apparently co-exist; "fairy tale" castles are as common as skyscrapers. Biology has become so out of control as to con-

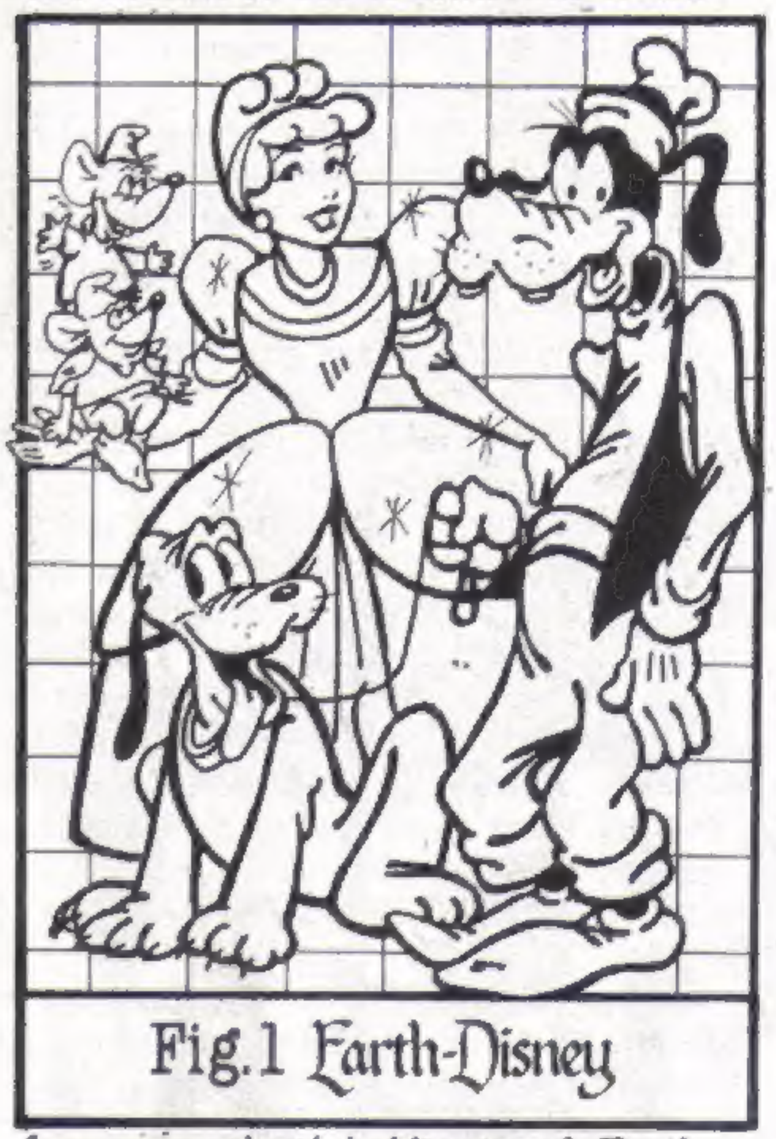


Fig.1 Earth-Disney

fuse even the inhabitants of Earth-Disney itself.

Consider these phenomena in respect to Earth-Disney:

First of all, the biological scheme of things. There are most definitely human beings on Earth-Disney, human beings exactly as they exist on Earth-Real. They have appeared often in Disney cartoon shorts, and have played very important roles in several Disney comic books, such as *"Donald Duck's Dangerous Disguise,"*[7] and *"Mickey Mouse, Secret Agent,"*[8] which went so far as to show an entire city of human beings on Earth-Disney!

There are also other biological varieties, most notably the intelligent, anthropomorphic animals, the most famous inhabitants of Earth-Disney. They include **Mickey Mouse**, **Donald Duck**, **Goofy**, **Uncle Scrooge**, and others like them.

Aside from this type, there are animals that aren't humanoid, but resemble the animals on Earth-Real. However they are intelligent, and often can speak. In this category are **Chip** and **Dale**, **Bambi** and **Thumper**, and so on.

And there's a fourth biological species: animals that are neither humanoid nor intelligent. In this category we find the animals on **Grandma Duck**'s farm, and others like them.

It is notable that on Earth-Real, we have only the first and last varieties. On **Howard**'s world, it is probable that only the second and last varieties exist. But on Earth-Disney, the mixture of all four causes a sort of culture shock. The **Big Bad Wolf** is an excellent example of this. He is obviously fond of pork, and we have seen several episodes where he raids **Grandma Duck**'s farm for pigs. The **Wolf**, however, cannot distinguish between fourth-level pigs and the **Three Little Pigs**, anthropomorphic second-level pigs. To him, "pigs is pigs." His son, **Little Bad Wolf**, knows the difference, and often finds himself acting as his father's foil, proving that even in this complex biological set-up, Nature provides a balance.

Another example of culture shock can be found in a **Huey**, **Dewey**, and **Louie** episode, in which the boys plan to make money by exhibiting their prize pet pig at a fair in hopes that it will win a prize. When the pig is rejected from the contest, the boys, undaunted, still win the prize money by having the pig display his three prize-winning ducklings![9]

Next let's look at the time discrepancies found on Earth-Disney. Present-day Duckburg is comparable to present-day Earth-Real's New York City.[10] It might be assumed that progress is slower on Earth-Disney, because Duckburg still seems well entrenched in the 1950's as far as attitudes, clothing, etc. are concerned, while **Howard**'s world, as has been noted, is definitely into the 1970's. For all practical purposes, let us say that Duckburg and Earth-Disney in general in 1977 are comparable to Earth-Real's 1977.

The question arises, then, as to how **Peter Pan** from turn-of-the-century London can co-exist with the Duckburgians of the present, or how the medieval characters from **SLEEPING BEAUTY** or **THE SWORD AND THE STONE** can show up in 1977 at **Scrooge**'s money bin. How was it possible for **Gus** and **Jaq**, the mice from **CINDERELLA**, to move from their

Fig.2 EARTH-HOWARD

castle after **Cinderella** married her prince, and immediately take up residence on **Grandma Duck**'s present-day farm?

To answer this, we will first assume that all the Disney films (and therefore their comic book versions and sequels) take place on various parallel Earths in the Disney Primary System. This can be supported by the fact that most of the films and comics have evidence of the four biological species (such as the talking mice in **CINDERELLA**, **Jiminy Cricket** in **PINNOCHIO**, the anthropomorphic **Merry Men** in **ROBIN HOOD**, etc.). With that in mind, we can look for a Nexus between parallel Disney-Earths, through which characters from various Reality Lines can travel to others. It may even be

Fig.3 Earth-Real

6. The **High Evolutionary** first appeared in **TALES TO ASTONISH** Nos. 94-96.
7. **FOUR COLOR COMICS** No. 308.
8. **MICKEY MOUSE** Nos. 105-107.
9. **FOUR COLOR COMICS** No. 282.
10. Earth-Real, best known to us all, is being used as a basis for comparison and contrast.

similar to the Nexus in the Florida swamp where the **Man-Thing** lives, the one that originally brought **Howard the Duck** to Earth-M.

The one location on the various Disney-Earths where mysticism and magic are consistently present is in the Enchanted Forest (also called the Black Forest). Let us assume that the Nexus among worlds in the Disney Primary System is somewhere in the Enchanted Forest.[11] With this premise, we can examine some of the most notable Disney films.

SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS. **Snow White** lived in a medieval castle but her friends, the **Seven Dwarfs** are probably natural inhabitants of the Enchanted Forest, making them accessible to and from all parallel Disney-Earths. Also since the **Queen/Witch** was apparently "killed" in the Forest at the end of the film, it's possible that her later appearance in modern-day Duckburg[12] can be explained with the assumption that she fell from the cliff through the Nexus into another Disney Reality, that of **Donald Duck**. Or, we could postulate that there was a Divergent Factor at the end of the film creating one tangent (shown in the film and comic book adaptation) where the **Witch** died, and another where she escaped and the **Dwarfs** fled to another Earth through the Nexus.

PINNOCHIO. After the puppet became a real boy, the **Blue Fairy** may have revealed the secret of the Enchanted Forest's doorways to other worlds to **Jiminy Cricket**, which enabled **Jiminy** to travel throughout the Disney Primary System, serving as "official conscience" for various Disney heroes. As for the apparent discrepancy of **Pinnochio** still appearing in comics as a puppet, we can assume that this dimensional counterpart of **Pinnochio** still had to prove his worth by having adventures on other parallel Disney-Earths before being granted humanity.

DUMBO. The saga of the flying elephant takes place in a modern Duckburg-like city in Florida. This city may even be on the same Disney-Earth as **Donald Duck's**.

BAMBI. Like the **Seven Dwarfs**, **Bambi** and friends may live near the Nexus in the Enchanted Forest. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that **Thumper** has met the **Seven Dwarfs** on several occasions.[13]

CINDERELLA, **SLEEPING BEAUTY** and **THE SWORD IN THE STONE** take place on their respective parallel Disney-Earths. Afterwards, the characters traveled to other Harmonic Earths through the Nexus. It's likely that **Mad Madam Mim** and **Merlin**, both of **THE SWORD AND THE STONE**, live in the Enchanted Forest proper and have more knowledge of other parallel Earths than does the average denizen of any of the worlds. **Mim** has not only been seen in Duckburg[14] but also Wonderland (from **ALICE IN WONDERLAND**) and Never Land (from **PETER PAN**). The rabbit hole that **Alice** fell through to get to Wonderland may have been a Focal Point corresponding to the Enchanted Forest. **Peter Pan** traveled to Never Land by flying to "the second star to the right and straight on till morning," which may indicate a Nexus high in the stratosphere.

Both Wonderland and Never Land have the four biological variations, characteristics of the Disney Primary System, and a few other varieties of sentient life as well. In Wonderland, there is a garden of talking flowers, while in Never Land exists **Tinkerbell**, a fairy-like pixie being. Wonderland and Never Land may not necessarily be parallel Earths in the Disney system, to judge by the different physical laws the worlds possess. They may well be fractional dimensions to the Disney Primary System.[15]

Another parallel Disney-Earth is the "fairy tale" dimension recently discovered by **Gyro Gearloose**.[16] **Gyro** invented Duckburg's first dimension travel device, and hired **Donald Duck** to examine the parallel dimension he tuned in on. **Donald**'s travels found him mainly in a forest (perhaps a corresponding to the Enchanted Forest) where all "fairy tales" co-exist, including a non-Disney version of **Sleeping Beauty**.

Further parallel Disney-Earths have also been hinted at. It has been established that there is a Disneyland amusement park on Earth-Disney[17] and that it is the hang-out for many of the Disney Heroes. It has also been established that **Mickey** and friends are movie stars — **Mickey**'s starred in such films as **THE SORCEROR'S APPRENTICE**[18] and **MICKEY AND THE BEANSTALK**.[19] The roles enacted by **Mickey Mouse** may well be depictions of reality on another Disney-Earth, but not for **Mickey** the actor. In all probability, **Mickey** has many different dimensional counterparts on various worlds in the Disney Primary System, among them being the movie star **Mickey**, the Sorceror's Apprentice, and the British turn-of-the-century **Mickey** who appeared in the *"Mickey and the Sleuth"* comics.[20]

In the Disney Primary System, there does seem to be some order to the apparent disorder. Still, its overwhelming complexity (biological and multi-temporal) which may be caused in part by having such an accessible Nexus as the Enchanted Forest, immediately sets it apart from **Howard the Duck**'s downbeat world. Fantasy and the supernatural figure prominently in the Disney-Earth's scheme of things, while **Howard**'s world (and Earth-M) depends more on the type of consistency that mysticism tends to upset rather than create.

As more is learned about **Howard the Duck** 's home world, and as more is discovered about the Disney-Earths, the argument presented here may change, but its basic premise and conclusions will probably remain intact. **Howard the Duck** never read the Duckburg Chronicle, and probably never will, unless the cosmic axis shifts again. . . ■

11. The Enchanted Forest itself may co-exist on any number if not all the parallel Earths in the Disney Primary System. As for the exact location of the dimensional aperture within the Forest, there is not enough evidence to determine.

12. **FOUR COLOR COMICS** No. 203 is the Witch's most famous Duckburg adventure.

13. **FOUR COLOR COMICS** No. 19.

14. **BEAGLE BOYS** No. 1.

15. Besides the Disney-Earths where **Alice** and **Peter Pan** live, there are also Earths where **Alice** as written by Lewis Carroll and **Peter** as written by J.M. Barrie exist.

16. **DONALD DUCK** No. 178.

17. **DONALD DUCK IN DISNEYLAND**.

18. **SILLY SYMPHONIES** No. 2.

19. **FOUR COLOR COMICS** No. 157.

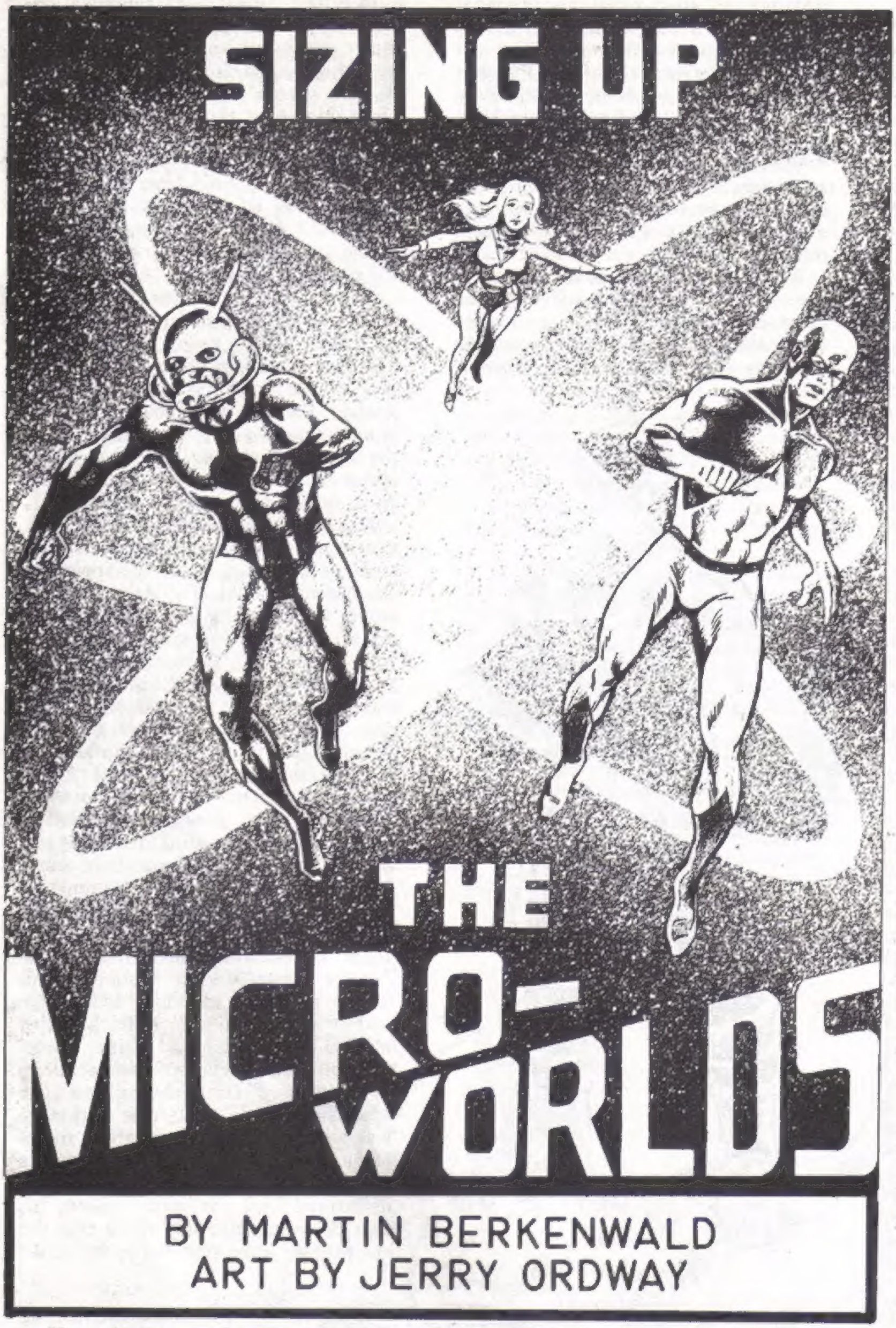
20. **WALT DISNEY SHOWCASE** Nos. 38-39.

ALTERNATE REALITIES IN THE DAILY NEWSPAPER

Head Entropist: "Surely--you cannot be suggesting--that there are alternate universes--co-existent parallel cosmos--?"

Howard the Duck: "Billions of 'em, probably. I hope you hairless apes didn't figure ya had a monopoly on existence!"

HOWARD THE DUCK 8-28-77



THE MICRO-WORLDS

BY MARTIN BERKENWALD
ART BY JERRY ORDWAY

If you're a wanderer, a traveling salesman, or just a plain old tourist incorporating a bit of world-hopping along your route, there are many different methods to take you places. You can travel within the three spatial dimensions to reach another planet in space. You can step across the dimensional threshold to a world in the same physical space but differing by a moment of time perhaps, or a vibration rate. Or you could reach another planet by still a third method — shrinking to a sub-atomic universe or a "microscopic" world.

Just what is a "microscopic" world? One of the early theoretical models of the atom depicted a central positively-charged nucleus orbitted by speeding negatively-charged electrons. Scientists took note of the seeming analogy to celestial systems — a "sun" orbitted by its "planets." Writers picked up on this idea and wrote stories depicting these miniature solar systems as containing worlds populated by intelligent life.[1]

The archetypal story of this ilk is *"He Who Shrank"* by Henry Hasse.[2] In it, a man is forced to ingest a serum called "Shrinx" which causes him to fall into a block of metal, between its very atoms. The serum energizes his body, making him immune to the debilitating effects of travel through atomic space. Drifting "downward," he sees the atoms as solar systems, and lands on a planet. Eventually he shrinks from that planet to still another group of atomic planets, unable to check his continued dwindling. from one world to another he passes, becoming ever smaller, meeting malicious, benevolent, and indifferent beings. One of the planets he passes through is Earth.

As with many other science fictional concepts, this plot source soon found itself in the pages of comic books. The most famous shrinking hero, the **Atom**, encountered an alien from an atomic universe early in his career,[3] and not long afterward journeyed to one of these universes. He states, "There is a theory that some atoms may be entire solar systems on a sub-microscopic scale. This will be my first visit to such a universe."[4]

The **Fantastic Four** entered a micro-world with the aid of the **Ant-Man** and his shrinking potion.[5] There they discovered **Doctor Doom**, who had accidentally been banished there when a plot to miniaturize the **Fantastic Four** had backfired.[6]

An invader from a sub-microscopic world calling himself the **Psycho-Man** attempted to conquer Earth in **FANTASTIC FOUR ANNUAL** No. 5.[7] Animating an artificial body that he controlled from his own world, the **Psycho-Man**'s schemes were thwarted by the **Inhumans**, **Black Panther**, the **Thing**, and the **Human Torch**. The three male members of the **Fantastic Four** encountered the **Psycho-Man** on his own world some time later while pursuing a sub-microscopically bound **Silver Surfer**.[8]

The **Justice League of America** were miniaturized by a shrinking ray

---

1. With worlds in the atoms of our world, another chink in Earth's defenses was found. Now aliens didn't have to invade from outer space. They could appear from within our bodies, clothing, or even a vacuum cleaner bag.

2. Raymond J. Healy, editor, **FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION STORIES** (New York: Random House, 1957).

3. Gardner Fox, *"The Machine That Made Miracles,"* **ATOM** No. 4, December 1962 — January 1963.

4. Gardner Fox, *"Diamond of Deadly Dooms,"* **ATOM** No. 5, February-March 1963, p. 3.

5. Stan Lee, *"The Micro-World of Doctor Doom,"* **FANTASTIC FOUR** No. 16, July 1963.

6. Stan Lee, *"The Return of Doctor Doom,"* **FANTASTIC FOUR** No. 10, January 1963.

7. Stan Lee, *"Divide and Conquer,"* **FANTASTIC FOUR ANNUAL** No. 5, November 1967.

8. Stan Lee, *"Stranded in Sub-Atomica,"* **FANTASTIC FOUR** No. 76, August 1968, and *"Shall Earth Endure!"* **FANTASTIC FOUR** No. 77, September 1968.

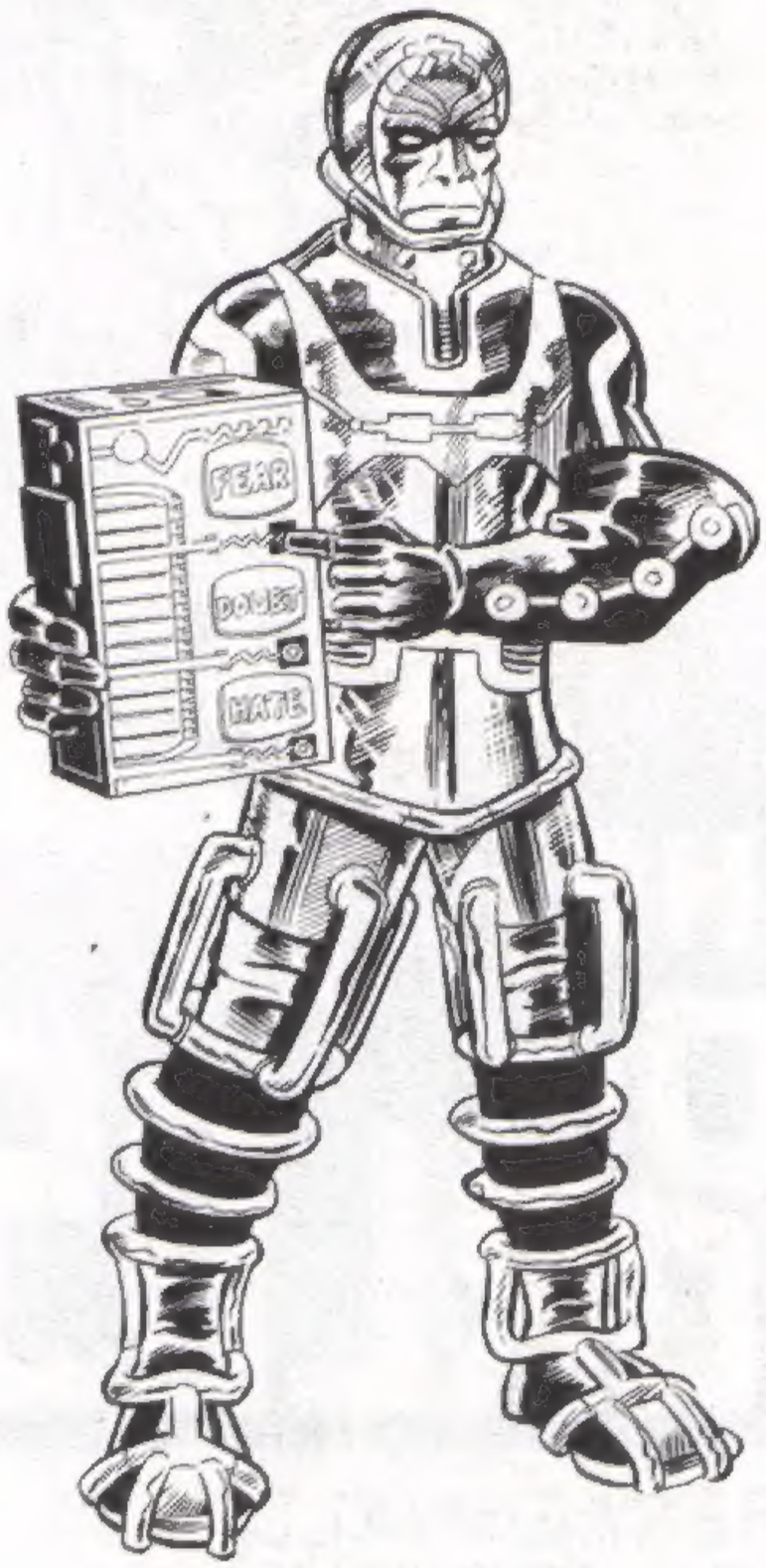
emanating from the micro-world of Starzl[9] in **JUSTICE LEAGUE** No. 18.[10] There they were entreated by the denizens of Starzl to help defeat the android **Protectors** who were inadvertantly sapping them of their life force. Later, in **JLA** No. 24,[11] the alien **Kanjar Ro** led the **Atom** on a wild goose chase looking for **Green Lantern** on the micro-world of Quill. Some extraterrestrials once banished **Aquaman** to a micro-world inside his other-dimensional wife's ring.[12] The world, populated by telepathic humanoids, alien slave traders, and amoeboids, has an atmosphere with the consistency of water, enabling its denizens to swim through it. **Aquaman** was rescued from the world by the power of his wife's mind: the micro-world is said to be under the influence of her brainwaves.

Aquaman's wife **Mera** is not the only possessor of a ring with a micro-world in it. **Green Lantern**'s ring possesses at least two such worlds. The first, introduced in **GREEN LANTERN** No. 10,[13] was inhabited by a scientist named Blanding and his family, who tried to create their own utopia far from Earth. The second, introduced in **GREEN LANTERN** No. 26,[14] was created by the ring's former possessor, **Abin Sur**, as a prison for the wizard **Myrwhydden**. There would seem to be as many possible micro-worlds in the ring as there are atoms in it.

When the **Hulk** was dispatched on a microscopic journey by the insectoid **Psyclop**, he arrived on a micro-world populated by green-skinned people like himself.[15] There magicians restored his intelligence, and he became consort to Queen **Jarella**, before **Psyclop** snatched him back to his original scale. The **Hulk** has made subsequent journeys to **Jarella**'s unnamed world,[16] and the emerald queen has twice undergone macroscopic transformation.[17]

And so it goes. With every atom being a potential site of intelligent life, there is no end of story matter. Yet, there are fundamental flaws in the sub-atomic solar system analogy. Consider: Each member of the **Fantastic Four** was standing feet apart when they prepared to shrink; how was it then they all arrived on the same atom-world? How was it that the homeworld of the **Psycho-Man** just happened to be among those on a slide on **Reed Richard**'s table? How can people return to the same atom-world when they're not even in the exact same spot where that atom was found before?[18] In traveling to sub-microscopic worlds, wouldn't a difference of mere millimeters be equivalent to light years?

With the continual advancement of theoretical science, the model of the atom has changed. Electrons are no longer thought of as being small spheres orbiting their nucleus. The current



Quantum theory has electrons occupying the field of highest probability for their existence in proximity to a nucleus. Electrons flow, recombine with others in a chain, and exist nearly unpredictably from space to space. If electrons do not resemble sub-microscopic planets, where are all the micro-worlds we've read of?

In Edwin Abbott's mathematical fiction book, **FLATLAND**,[19] a two-dimensional sentient square is visited by a three-dimensional sentient sphere. As the sphere lowers itself onto the plane in which the square lives, the sphere's image appeared to grow. Similarly, when the sphere was visited by an "Over-Sphere" from the fourth dimension in Dionys Burger's **SPHERELAND**[20] the Over-Sphere's image also appeared to shrink as it left three-dimensional space.

Having discredited the notion that micro-worlds exist orbiting the nucleus of atoms, all we really know is that when one enters micro-worlds one appears to shrink. Applying the **Flatland** analogy, perhaps when one shrinks, one is not shrinking into a universe within the atoms of another, but rather, one is egressing from this three-dimensional plane into another spatial dimension.

• This concept of shrinking may explain one of the great unresolved scientific enigmas in comics — what happens to the **Atom**'s weight. The **Atom** has the ability to change his weight (weight being the effect of one mass on another) from 180 pounds to mere milligrams. Within Earth's space, the only way for one to increase or decrease one's mass would be to gain or lose atoms.[21] Compression, the standard explanation for his ability, could account for a change in size but not mass. So what happens to **Atom**'s weight? How can he defy the basic laws of nature? How can he jump into the air as light as a feather, gain altitude, and plummet at full weight; in effect, bringing new energy into the world?

Let us examine the source of the **Atom**'s power. Dr. Ray Palmer found that a fragment of white dwarf star matter enabled him to build a device able to shrink objects in size. Unfortunately, the objects could not remain in a "compressed" state for long, and upon expansion, their molecular structure was so unstable it caused them to explode. Forced to use the shrinking lens on himself to save his friends, Palmer discovered that for some reason, his own body was the only thing that did not explode when restored to full size.[22]

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9. Minus the **Atom**, who traveled under his own power.

10. Gardner Fox, *"Journey Into the Micro-World."* **JUSTICE LEAGUE** No. 18, March 1963.

11. Gardner Fox, *"Decoy Missions of the Justice League."* **JUSTICE LEAGUE** No. 24, December 1963.

12. Steve Skeates, *"City on the Edge of Nowhere."* **AQUAMAN** No. 50, March-April 1970.

13. John Broome, *"Prisoner of the Power Ring."* **GREEN LANTERN** No. 10, January 1962.

14. Gardner Fox, *"World Within the Power Ring."* **GREEN LANTERN** No. 26, January 1964.

15. Harlan Ellison/Roy Thomas, *"The Brute That Shouted Love at the Heart of the Atom."* **HULK** No. 140, June 1971.

16. **HULK** No. 148, 155-156.

17. On her second journey to Earth in **HULK** No. 203, **Jarella** met her demise.

18. **GREEN LANTERN** No. 10 substantiates the idea that one does not have to be near the micro-world one wishes to travel to. Dr. Blanding miniaturized himself in a laboratory outside Coast City and yet materialized on an atomic world within **Green Lantern**'s ring.

19. Edwin A. Abbott, **FLATLAND** (New York: Dover Publications, 1952).

20. Dionys Burger, **SPHERELAND** (New York: Apollo Editions, 1969).

21. In Fritz Lieber's **Fafhrd** and **Grey Mouser** novel, **THE SWORDS OF LANKHMAR**, the **Grey Mouser** does exactly that. Shrunk by magic, the **Mouser** leaves a large puddle of his excess mass. Later, in order to regain his full size, he leaches mass from an obese woman.

22. *"I can come to but one conclusion — that some mysterious force in my own body — whatever it is, I don't yet know — enabled me to regain my proper size."* — Ray Palmer in **SHOWCASE** No. 34. What this mysterious force is was never explained. Since Palmer wouldn't risk testing the shrinking device on other human subjects,

Refining his discovery, he fashioned a costume out of the white dwarf material and a belt control that regulated his size and weight.[23] As the **Atom**, Palmer could shrink to any imaginable size under his normal six foot stature, and reduce his weight to any amount under his normal 180 pound weight.

Yet where do the pounds and inches go when he uses his invention? Let us look at the white dwarf star from which his power is derived. Science tells us that gravity is the product of a mass twisting the spatial continuum around it. Near an extremely dense gravity field, the laws of time and space are no longer constant. Geometry does not apply: a straight line is no longer straight. A white dwarf star has sufficient mass to warp space.

Somewhere and somewhen, a white dwarf star exploded, sending fragments off through space. The explosion, or just the warping effect of the original gravity field, pushed some fragments partly out of the plane of this universe. When Palmer first found his white dwarf star fragment, carried it to his car, and drove off, he demonstrated that it was no ordinary piece of matter. A stellar fragment of the size he found would have sufficient gravity to wrap Palmer around it in a bloody pulp inches thick. At the very least, he would have ruptured himself trying to lift a rock weighing tons. Hence, the white dwarf fragment, in order to be immune to some of the ambient effects of our universe, must have already been partly out of this dimensional plane.[24] Utilizing the fragment, Palmer derives its properties, able to alter his weight by shifting his mass out of this plane, and able to change his size by receding to various degrees from Earth's space.

Let's take a look at the second most incredible shrinking man in comics, Henry Pym the **Ant-Man**. Pym is also able to reduce his size to submicroscopic stature[25] and decrease his weight accordingly.[26] Obviously, **Ant-Man** employs the weight shunt and dimensional extension that the **Atom** does, However, Pym's power derives from a quite different source than Palmer's. Without the aid of white dwarf star fragments, Pym invented a serum (later refined to a gas and then a pill) that enabled his miniaturization.

Granting these chemicals the ability to induce organic changes, it still seems implausible that dimensional extension is an organic ability. Rather, it would seem to be a mental ability,[27] the chemicals that Pym ingests are mental stimulants of some sort. Later, Pym bypassed the drugs with direct mental stimulation via his cybernetic helmet.[28] Still later, **Ant-Man** was able to attain the mental state necessary to dimensionally extend without any artificial aids, through concentration alone.[29]

So we can see that even discarding the atomic solar system model, the process of shrinking can still be capable of opening doorways into other worlds. The so-called micro-worlds may possibly be vibrational dimensions with fractional vibration rates.[30] Or they may even be something unto themselves, arranged in a continuum quite different from the vibrational worlds, but ultimately a part of the same Omniverse. ■

we don't really know if all humans possess the ability to enlarge without exploding, or whether it is a mutant ability of Palmer's.

23. The precise nature of the belt control mechanism regulating his size and weight has never been shown.

24. The white dwarf fragment would appear to have other strange properties besides being dimensionally extended. In **ATOM** No. 2, a small pocket-size pellet altered probability and performed anti-gravitational feats. In **ATOM** No. 14, the chunk of the white dwarf star fragment from which Palmer's piece was a chip became both sentient and evil.

25. **FANTASTIC FOUR** No. 16 and **HULK** No. 155 are the only two recorded instances where Pym used his shrinking method to enable travel to a micro-world.

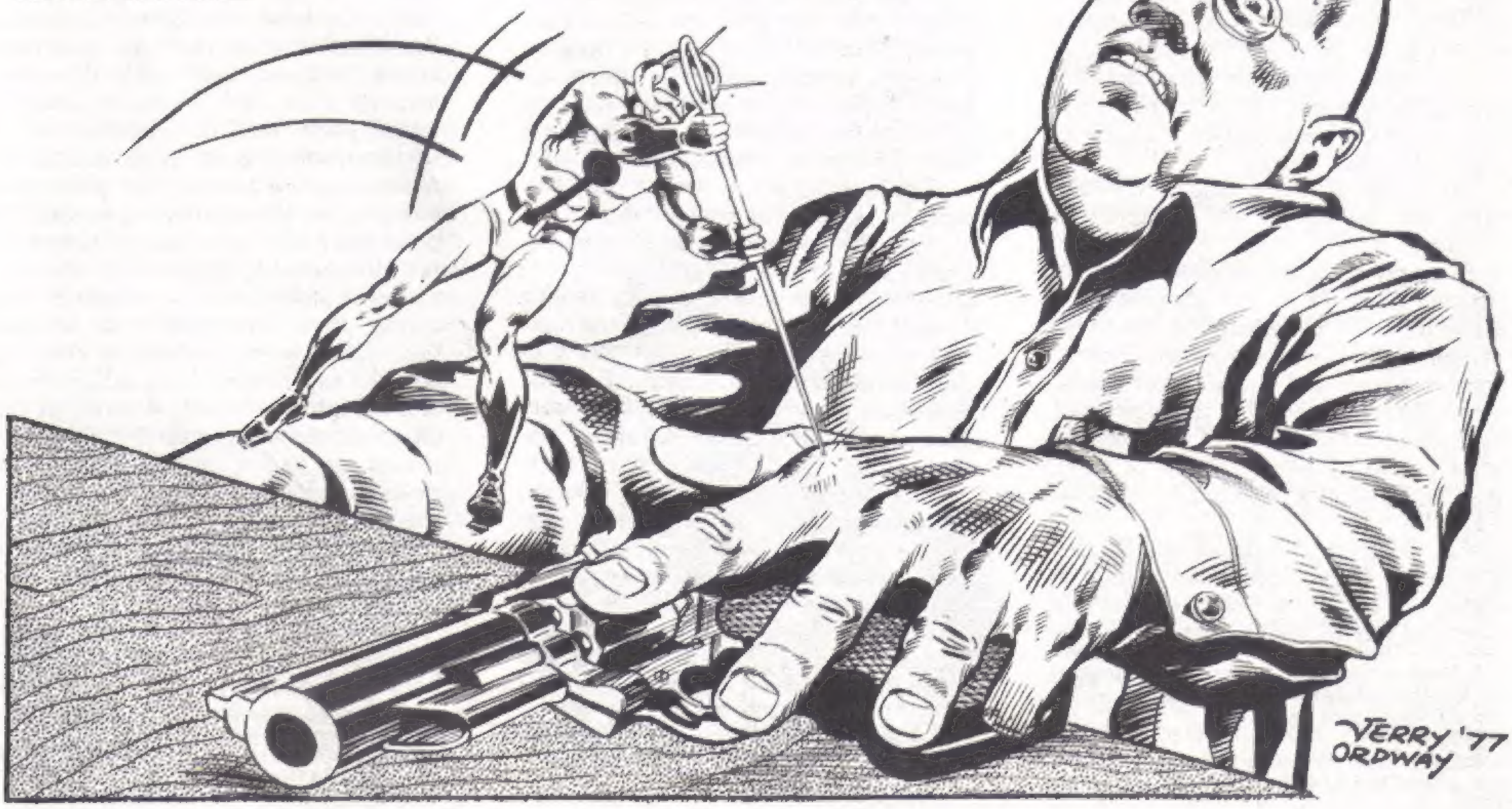
26. Pym does not seem to have the independent control of his weight that Palmer does. However, it is apparent that when he is ant-size he does not retain the weight he has at human size.

27. The ability to grow larger than one's normal height and to accordingly increase in mass (demonstrated by Pym in his **Giant-Man/Goliath** phases) may well be the ability to dimensionally extend into a macroscopic universe, larger than our own.

28. The helmet may act like an alpha wave generator.

29. This ability was achieved by Darrell (**Dollman**) Dane without the intermediary steps of drugs and brain stimulants. Apparently dimensional extension can be a mutant ability.

30. Mark Gruenwald, **TORICL**, pp. 28-33.



FORUM

This regular feature of **OMNIVERSE** will present various viewpoints on the Omniversal Theory. Contributors to FORUM will explore ramifications, expound on unresolved matters, and expose discrepanices and oversights. Each piece will be constructive in approach, not seeking to discredit concepts without offering a more viable replacement. The ideas presented herein should not be considered automatically annexed to the whole of the Omniversal Theory by virtue of publication. Indeed, some ideas will contest fundamental concepts. It will become evident by consensus and usage which ideas have passed into general acceptance.

Although each article in FORUM will stand on its own, each will gain in depth and clarity in the context of a general knowledge of the Omniversal Theory. For those who have not already acquainted themselves with such, we recommend **A PRIMER ON REALITY IN COMIC BOOKS** (75¢ from Alternity Enterprises).

The Imagination Fallacy

By Dean Mullaney

One of the major premises that the Omniversal Theory is based upon is: In an infinite number of "fictional" universes, there is room for everything to be real somewhere.[1] Taking this to its logical conclusion, the question becomes: does having room for every possibility mean that every possibility **has** to exist? To use an analogy, if one has a hotel that can accomodate any and every guest possible, does that mean that any and every guest possible **has** to live there?

On one hand, if everything imaginable is **not** necessarily real, how will we distinguish between depictions of reality and depictions of fiction? On the other hand, if everything **is** actually real somewhere it would be impossible to "imagine" that something doesn't exist. In other words, there is no such thing as "imagination" or original thought. This extreme has been called the **Imagination Fallacy** to the Omniversal Theory.

The intent of this article is to determine the validity of the Imagination Fallacy.

To begin with, let us consider those persons from whom our knowledge of other Realities has stemmed. Do these persons, whom we refer to as "fiction" writers, create and shape the events of other Reality Lines by the power of their imaginations? Or do they relate by some means of insight, events of other Reality Lines over which they have no control?[2]

The prime proponent of the Shaper Theory is Cary Bates.[3] According to Bates, he on Earth-Prime shapes the events of Earth-One by the power of his imagination. His so-called "plotting power" causes whatever he writes about on his Reality Line to occur on another. The major flaw in the Bates theory is that all writers would have to be considered Diversifals since they would exert major influences on the events that define a Reality Line. If Bates were a Diversifal, his being-born/not-being-born would be a Divergent Factor on Earth-One.[4]

If one allows for such external influence, there would have to exist a complex network of inter-related dependencies among Reality Lines. Who would control whom? What writer from yet another Reality Line would be controlling the events on Earth-Prime, controlling Cary Bates? The Omniversal Theory states that there is no dependence among Reality Lines and no Reality Line has special properties others do not.[5] To abandon this postulate would be to invite the problem of untangling a skein of infinite interdependences.

Dismissing that a writer (or any person) is able to control events on another Reality Line, let us examine the theory that what a writer writes is controlled by the events of another Reality Line. It has been established in the comics that some people have the ability to "see" into other Reality Lines.[6] Some of these persons write down what they see, perhaps unaware of the nature of the process by which they derived their ideas. Most would call it their 'imagination." But just as a writer cannot control the events of another Reality Line without there being a system of interdependence, neither could the events of another Reality Line control what a writer writes. Therefore, insights into other Realities must derive not from the events but from the individual. The individual must possess some sort of ability to "see" into other Reality Lines.

Are only certain people gifted with the ability to have insight? Or is it a natural ability that everyone has to an extent, but only some make use of?

To answer this, we must analyze "insight" itself. Let us define Insight as "mental travel to another Reality Line." How might it be accomplished? To physically travel between Reality Lines, one must attune one's bodily vibration rate to that of the Reality Line to which one wishes to travel. Would mental travel then simply consist of attuning one's **mind** to the vibration rate corresponding to where one wishes to travel?

In order to physically travel between Reality Lines without the use of devices or nexuses, one must have mental mastery over one's vibration rate. It would seem that one would need a similar mastery to effect mental travel. Attuning one's mental vibration rate, however, would require less energy appropriation than attuning one's physical vibration rate. A number of mental disciplines[7] are known to our culture, among them Transcendental Meditation. TM involves "consciously entering into the experience of the subtle strata of a thought, eventually arriving at the direct experience of a thought, then arriving at the very source of the thought."[7] Perhaps through a process like that of TM, one is able to attune one's mind to a thought, and trace its source. On another Reality Line, that thought may be reality.

Just as physical travel between parallel dimensions is most easily facilitated between Reality Lines whose vibrational rates are harmonic to one

1. Mark Gruenwald, **A Treatise on Reality in Comic Literature** (Oshkosh; Alternity Enterprises. 1976), p. 11.
2. **Ibid.** p. 70.
3. Cary Bates, *"The Day I Saved the Life of the Flash,"* **FLASH** No. 228 (July-August, 1974).
4. As a Diversifal, Bates' very birth would effect the reality of Earth-One.
5. Gruenwald, **op.cit.**, p. 35.
6. **Ibid.**, p. 11.
7. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, **Transcendental Meditation** (New York; The New American Library, Inc., 1968), p. xvii.

another,[8] so, too, may be the case with mental re-attunement. To invoke TM as an example again, "if (the mind) is put to activity in a very normal and natural manner . . . the infusion of . . . Being[9] is retained for some time."[10] If, as the Omniversal Theory asserts, harmonics are the natural state of being, mental travel between Harmonic Earths would be easiest to accomplish. Therefore, we may be able to understand how one may "see" into other Reality Lines.[11]

Mental disciplines such as Transcendental Meditation have been developed so that they are learnable by anyone. We might surmise that the ability to mentally travel to other Reality Lines is a universal ability.

The next question we must examine is whether everyone always makes use of this ability. Is what we refer to as "imagination" always insight? There are four possibilities regarding the incidence of insight:

1. Some people have insights some of the time.
2. Some people have insight all of the time.
3. All people have insights some of the time.
4. All people have insights all of the time.

We can conclude that at least the first possibility is true since it is one of our "Givens." The third possibility is also very likely by reasoning of our TM analogy. But objections could be raised regarding the hypotheses "all of the time."

First, the **Coincidence Factor**. How can we be certain that one is making use of insight **every** single time one relates something "Fictional?" Is it not possible that one can relate events without using insight, they just happen to resemble something real on another, parallel Earth?

If there is room for everything to be real in an infinite number of universes, anything one could think of could be found to be real somewhere. But how can we determine whether the insight process was invoked when deriving the "fictional" events. We can't, nor can we prove that it was not used, without further evidence.

The second objection to the "all of the time" hypothesis is: the **Discrepancy Factor**. If all insights are equally legitimate, why do some conflict?

Just as there are individual differences in the degree of facility that certain minds can master various mental disciplines, so might there be individual differences in the ability to have insight. One may be able to train one's mind to see into other Realities with a greater degree of clarity and consistency than others who have not fully realized their ability. Hence less disciplined minds may get only partial glimpses of other Realities. Unable to maintain a fixed hold on one vibration rate, their minds may wander and get glimmerings of more than one close variant.

The **Superman** Vs. **Spider-Man** meeting would appear to be a prime suspect of undisciplined insight. An explanation how the two beings from different Reality Lines were able to interface was never offered. Perhaps author Gerry Conway had an insight into a Reality where both heroes co-exist. In the Omniverse, there is room for such a world. Yet this story suggests that the meeting took place on either Earth-One or Earth-M, or that they are one and the same. It is beyond the intent of this piece to debate the latter possibility in detail although the evidence to the contrary is more substantial than the evidence to support it. It would seem more reasonable to surmise that because of Conway's not fully realized insight abilities, he was afforded partial glimpses into the separate Realities of Earth-One and Earth-M, and confused them, believing they were but one.

Not only must we take into account the inability to maintain a sharp focus on a given Reality Line, but also that some writers may have varying degrees of adeptness at recalling their insights and/or relating them. Distortion would be the net effect if the writer's ability at focus, recall, and storytelling was not equally and adequately honed.

Just as when one explains a dream one uses everyday reference points, the non-adept writer might fill in the gaps from his/her partial insights from personal experiences in his/her own Reality Line. Hence every inconsistency ever perpetrated in comics (and "fiction" in general) can be understood to have occurred because of the relater's less than precise grasp of some aspect involved in the process of gleaning insights from other Realities.

What we have done is to present a substantial case to show that what we have thought of as "imagination" is actually insight. But calling "imagination" "insight" is not just giving it another name, but changing the very quintessence of the process. The ramifications are immense.

Without "imagination," there is no such thing as original thought. All thought would derive from external sources, and none solely from one's self. Let us outline the derivations of all thought:

1. **Observation**. This would include ideas derived from sensory input, such as "the Sun revolves around the Earth."
2. **Intuition** or **insight**. As defined in this article, this would be conclusions derived from a psychic contact with other Realities.
3. **Communication**. Through a system of symbols such as language other beings transmit ideas.
4. There are certain bits of knowledge that seem to exist in their lowest common denominator, serving as building blocks for other higher-order reasoning. The origin of these irreducible thoughts is unknown. However, we may propose how such thoughts are realized. We have seen that through a mental discipline, the conscious capacity of the mind is increased. Perhaps there are those whose minds have drawn from this central pool of absolute knowledge, and gathered these irreducible thoughts to convey to others.
5. "**Imagination**." The "creation" of something that did not exist before. The contention of this article is that this is not possible.

To illustrate, if this argument against imagination you are reading was not "created," where did it come from? Probably not observation. Possibly some from insight. Undoubtedly some irreducible thoughts. Certainly some from communication with others. What I did then, was to **synthesize**, draw from a number of sources and combine them into new fused thoughts, rather than "create." This does not mean that the thoughts are any less valuable or distinct, only that the process from which they are attained is different. Some people have the ability to synthesize better than others. In the past

8. Gruenwald, **op.cit.**, p. 16.
9. "Being" is the state one's mind attains upon transcending thought.
10. Yogi, **op. cit.**, p. 54.
11. Further, through a mental discipline such as TM, we may understand how one may "see" into the past and/or future. In order to physically travel in time, one must first attune one's bodily vibration rate to O CPU, and then reattune it to the vibration rate of the Reality Line corresponding to the time one wishes to travel to (**TORICL**, p. 47). Being is defined as "the state of no experience, because the whole field of relativity has been transcended." (**Transcendental Meditation**, p. 53). If this state of "no experience" could be construed as the mental equivalent of the physical body's attainment of a zero vibration rate, perhaps one may be able to have insights into time as well as other Reality Lines.

these persons have been called "creative." This person is no less unique than before, since the synthesis ability is not as developed in all persons.

An example of the synthesizing ability may be derived from a simple equation such as water, H2O. Although water appears to be a "creation" as it is a substance which presents a new quality unto itself, it is actually composed of two parts hydrogen, one part oxygen. H2O, or water, therefore, is not a "creation," but a synthesis of hydrogen and oxygen.

Returning to the specific, "fiction" writing, would the purposeful distortion of an insight not be a "creation" rather than a synthesis? No, because the distortion would be comprised of additive parts of separate Realities, synthesized in such a way that although the whole is not true, its parts are true in their own contexts.

To reiterate the major points of this argument against "imagination," we have seen that **all** persons have insights some of the time, and perhaps **all** of the time. Further, everything depicted by "fiction" writers is based on reality, although many distortions from other external sources could occur; all worlds are not necessarily real precisely as they are depicted. Further, that which we have heretofore called "imagination" is in actuality insight and synthesis. In conclusion, there is no such thing as "imagination" or "creative" thought. ■

Ethereality, Divergence, Diversifals

by Harry Broertjes

Among the issues unresolved so far in the Omniversal Theory are the twin questions of how and why reality diverges. The phenomenon of divergence — the branching of a single Reality Line into two new Reality Lines, each with a unique, harmonically higher vibration rate — has been theorized[1] along with the notion that divergences coincide with events of great significance within a Phenomenal Field,[2] thereby serving as a means of allowing two contrasting events simultaneously to exist.[3] Yet to be explored, however, are the Omniversal physics that come into play prior to, during and following a divergence.

A Phenomenal Field the size of a solar system is a large place. Surely it must take a correspondingly large force to cause, say, a parallel Earth and its environs, actualized at a certain vibration rate, to instantly become two parallel Earths actualized at higher harmonics. What is that force? How is it activated? Can it be manipulated?

And what of the event that initiates the divergence — the Divergent Factor? Until now, only a correlation, not a firm cause-and-effect relationship, has been demonstrated between any event and the divergence which resulted. While we may be fairly certain that Earth-One diverged at the crucial instant Barry Allen became the **Flash**, there remains the question of exactly how and why one event led to the other.

To answer these questions it will be necessary to postulate the existence of something we shall call **ether**. Ether is neither matter nor energy, but rather a "something" that is unactual — i.e., a "something" that does not exist in any Reality Line. Outside all the realities extant at any instant, it pervades the Omniverse, existing at and comprising all pre- and post-actualized vibration rates. The whole of the Omniverse is made up of Reality Lines and ether.

While ether is neither matter nor energy, it may be viewed roughly as a form of potential energy. In concert with a DivergentFactor, this potential energy may raise the state of a Reality Lineand allow it to exist at two states. In other words, ether would be the force that "shoves" a Phenomenal Field through a divergence by activating the inherent divergent property of reality.

Ether would be that and more. One characteristic of the Omniverse is its tendency toward greater complexity.[4] As one of the Omniverse's components, ether may be assumed to exhibit a similar characteristic. For ether, the step toward complexity beyond its undefined, unactualized existence is an actualized existence, necessarily as matter or energy — which of course are ultimately the same thing, and which comprise reality as we know it. When this occurs, the ether by definition would cease to be ether.

While one of ether's postulated properties is its ability to bring about a divergence, the mere fact that it actualizes would not be sufficient to result in a divergence. If the actualization proceeds at a gentle, relatively constant rate, ether would not affect an entire Reality Line.

But suppose that at times the actualization process is neither gentle nor constant. If it is explosively irregular, it's conceivable that the violence of the transformation, especially in a small spatial area within a Phenomenal Field, will "tear the fabric of reality," as the phrase goes. At the Atomic Instant this occurs, when the barriers between reality and non-reality are down, that ether would be able to directly affect a Reality Line. Result: divergence.

So far, these properties of ether, and indeed the very existence of ether, are hypothetical. There is no strong evidence in comic literature either to prove or to disprove its validity. But careful readers may already have noted that theactualizationof ether under unusual circumstances must coincide with a Divergent Factor.

The Omniversal Theory defines the essential nature of Divergent Factors — either-or situations that result in divergence — but sets down no guidelines to determine which of the countless alternative situations that occur every second will result in divergences. It states only that their outcomes must somehow be significant to the Phenomenal Fields in which they occur. But many times, according to the theory, this can be discovered only in retrospect.[5]

What is significance? Significance is in the mind. If a universe unknown and unpopulated by intelligent beings implodes, it's fairly safe to say a divergence would not occur. Although an either-or situation is present — either the universe implodes or it doesn't — it is not significant; there would be no Divergent Factor. No paradox would require resolution, either, because the threat of paradox does not occur in nature — it must be the result of directed activity. Further, if it's presumed that the implosion would not involve the actualization of ether, the fabric of that reality would not be torn — at least not in a manner that would result in divergence.

For an either-or situation to be significant, there must be an involvement of sentient beings, beings which may or may not be "intelligent" as we commonly use the term. Therefore, we may speculate that divergence, and thus the actualization of ether, is the result of sentient activity.

Not everyone goes around diverging reality or actualizing ether as part of his or her — or its — daily life. But if divergences are to occur, some must — whether they're aware of it or not.

Take the **Flash**, for instance: In carrying out his duties as a superspeedster, he expends an incredible amount of energy — far more than he possibly could generate after eating three square meals a day. How does he get that extra energy? Take **Lightning Lad** of the **Legion of Super-Heroes**: When he unleashes a powerful bolt of electricity, does that energy come only

1. Mark Gruenwald, **Treatise on Reality in Comic Literature** (Oshkosh, Alternity Enterprises,1976), pp. 14-16.
2. **Ibid.**, p. 15.
3. **Ibid.**, p. 55.
4. **Ibid.**, p. 68.
5. **Ibid.**, pp. 15, 72-73.

from his bodily tissues? Or take **Doctor Strange**: He's aware that his powers don't originate within him but instead are tapped by him from what he once referred to as a universal supply of "magical energy."[6]

What if **Doctor Strange**'s "magical energy" is not that at all, but rather a sort of energy outside him which he utilizes in his own peculiar fashion? What if he, the **Flash** and **Lightning Lad** all tap the same potential energy source and simply put it to use in the ways their bodies are equipped to direct it? What if that potential energy is ether?

If we accept this as being the case, then the mechanics of divergence fall into place. As the **Flash** goes about his daily super-speed patrol, and even if along the way he captures a few bank robbers, terrorists and jay-walkers, he would be tapping the Omniversal supply at a relatively steady rate; thus, no divergence even though he'll have come across a number of either-or situations. But if he encounters a super-villain against whom he must put forth his utmost effort, perhaps in a matter of life-or-death, he would expend energy and tap the ether at a much greater — and much more erratic — rate. In that case, a divergence would be likely, especially if the villain is an ether-tapper as well. Several divergences may result, in fact, if the ongoing ethereal transformation becomes intense and violent enough to disturb the barrier between reality and non-reality a number of times as the battle progresses.

Under different situations, the same phenomenon would occur during confrontations which involve **Doctor Strange**, **Lightning Lad**, or any number of other supra-normal beings. Collectively, these beings may be known as Diversifals,[7] and their common characteristic would be in their ability to tap ether in a fashion that could bring on a divergence.

Generally speaking, Diversifals in this framework would include some beings who possess what we call super-powers, magicians and sorcerors, and beings with great mental abilities. In addition, beings with a working knowledge of the existence and properties of ether may construct mechanical devices which can imitate the ability of Diversifals to cause divergences.[8]

All of which is not to say that the average Terran does not make use of ether on occasion as well. The Gardner Fox of Earth-One, for example, received dream images from Earth-Two and on that basis chronicled the adventures of Jay (**Flash**) Garrick.[9] If those dream images made the transition through the "vibrational barrier lands" — the ether separating the two Earths — we might well infer that many, if not all, dreams experienced by human beings are actual views of events occurring in parallel realities.[10] While the Terran would not be making direct use of ether, he or she would at least have some unwitting experience with it.

In a more pronounced fashion, telepathy may have an ethereal quality at least as far as thought-casting and -receiving are concerned, with the instantaneous mental link of a **Saturn Girl** or **Prof. Xavier** accomplished through the ether instead of through conventional space. While telepaths might or might not actualize ether when they make use of their abilities, we may surmise that a raging mental battle would possibly have the effect of ripping reality's fabric as the combatants square off for their confrontation across the ether — even if physically they are only a few feet apart. Telekinetics would be likely to draw on ether when they use their power.

The foregoing examples illustrate the effects of true Diversifals' actions. However, other beings, while not Diversifals, strictly speaking, may still be able to cause divergences. They would fall into two categories: communal Diversifals and indirect Diversifals

A communal Diversifal would be a large group of "ordinary" beings who, responding simultaneously to a traumatic stimulus, collectively release such a large amount of psychic energy that the real/ethereal barrier is pierced and a divergence occurs. The unrestrained terror of six billion Kryptonians during the moments prior to their world's destruction probably would have been more than sufficient to accomplish a divergence — assuming they possessed the latent telepathic powers that many believe Terrans have."

An indirect Diversifal would be an individual whose actions directly influence the actions of a true Diversifal when the true Diversifal's actions result in a divergence. For example, the **Batman** may be considered an indirect Diversifal insofar as his actions have a bearing on **Superman**'s when a divergence occurs; he would be an element in the Divergent Factor. Similarly, Rick Jones would be an indirect Diversifal. to **Captain Marvel**-as-Diversifal.

In fact, one need stretch one's mind very little to agree that the ranks of the indirect Diversifals probably include **Spider-Man**, General Thunderbolt Ross, Jarvis the butler, Jimmy Olsen . . . and the mutant Cary Bates!

The concept of ethereality, then, is like a putty with which we can seal neglected holes in the Omniversal Theory. ■

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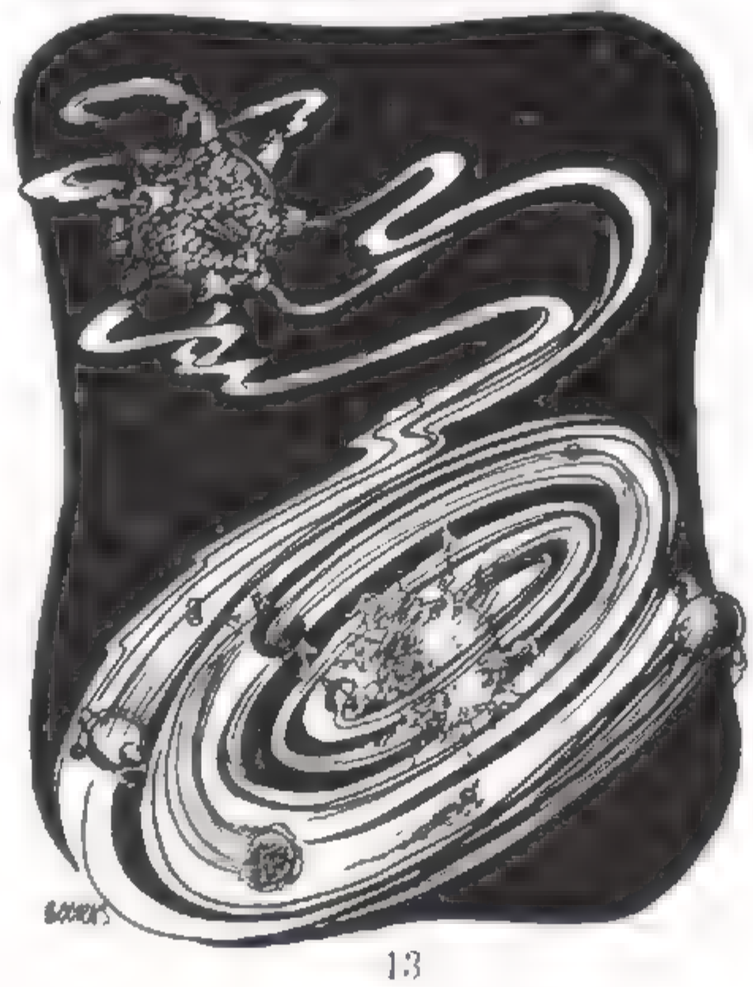
6. According to **Sise-Neg** in **MARVEL PREMIERE** No. 13, Earth-M's universe contains a limited supply of that "magical energy" — a ludicrous notion, for if the universe is infinite, then there must be infinite supply of all its components as well. Further, neither **Sise-Neg** or **Dr. Strange** was unaware of the existence of other dimensions, at least some of which could have been assumed to hold "magical energy" as well, granting their ignorance of ether. Their battle was for naught.

7. The term "diversifal," as used here, holds a somewhat different definition than the one given it by the man who coined the term, Ross Rocklynne, as cited by Gruenwald, p. 72.

8. Examples of this could be the central power battery of the **Guardians** of Oa, the energy of which is transmitted to the portable power batteries in the possession of the **Green Lantern** Corps, and the **Legion of Super-Heroes**' Miracle Machine, presented to them by the inhabitants of the Controller Universe in **ADVENTURE** No. 367, April, 1968.

9. Gardner Fox, *"Flash of Two Worlds,"* **FLASH** No. 123, September, 1961.

10. Similarly, the super-vision powers of **Superman** and **Supergirl** may be ethereal, if not telepathic. When **Superman** uses his telescopic vision to, say, snoop on the Bizarro World x-number of parsecs away and obtains an instantaneous view, it becomes apparent that his vision powers are not optically based. Likewise, a case could be made that all of his non-muscular powers are the result of his ability to tap ether in his own way — an ability facilitated by the action of a yellow sun's ultra-solar rays on his body.



11. On the other hand, it's doubtful that any parallel Earth diverged when John F. Kennedy was assassinated or when the Allies won World War II, as implied by Gruenwald. Assuming Kennedy himself was not a diversifal, the mere fact of his death, shocking as it was, would not be sufficient to crack the ethereal barrier and result in a divergence. In the first place, the reaction of the world to the news of his death did not occur simultaneously, and so a communal Diversifal reaction would be highly unlikely; in any event, even if the reaction were simultaneous, it would occur after the fact — too late to make a difference. In the second place, if one is at first willing to believe Kennedy's death resulted in a divergence, one must also be willing to believe Kennedy's **election** diverged the Earth in 1960 — as would his election as senator and as congressman before that, the sinking of PT 109, his own birth, the moment of his conception, the births of his parents, and on back **ad infinitum**. Each event would be equally significant, subjectively, for if any link in the chain

were broken it would have had approximately the same result as his assassination — the rocking chair would not rock in the White House on Nov. 23, 1963. If such a train of thought is pursued, Point One is reached: That is, theoretically every event, no matter how insignificant at the moment it occurs, will have some bearing on the future — kill a housefly and you change the future. Every single phenomenon, viewed in retrospect, then would be sufficient to diverge reality. Ethereality theory rejects this. While it confirms that only "significant" events will result in a divergence, it does not guarantee that a divergence will occur with every significant occurrence or even that a "more significant" event will be a Divergent Factor while a "less significant" event will not. Indeed, the reverse will probably be true on occasion. Sometimes you just can't have it both ways.

The Reflection/Echo Effect

by Sergio J. Andrade

Events on separate Reality Lines have no dependency on one another, according to the Omniversal Theory.[1] Yet, similar events frequently occur among parallel dimensions, enough so to discredit mere coincidence. Why, for instance, do Earth-M, Earth-One, and Earth-Real always seem to have the same President of the United States? Why are a great number of super-heroes on Earth-Two duplicated in one form or another on Earth-One? Why is the history of Earth-Three in effect a parody of Earth-Real's?

What would seem to be occurring is the transmission of information between one Reality Line and another, and the transformation of that information into physical events. But how can such information transmission take place?

Apparently something must act as "carrier waves." Let us propose that it is each dimension's vibration rate that possesses the property of the recording and transmission of information.[2] Events would then be recorded and transmitted much like sound is recorded and transmitted via radio waves. But instead of being broadcast through space, "vibration waves" would be propagated through the inter-dimensional medium. Traversing the medium, the waves would be able to be received on parallel Earths which are harmonic to the Earth transmitting them.

Why just Harmonic Earths? For the simple reason that neither matter nor energy can exist on a given Earth (and thus be able to influence reality) unless it vibrates at that Earth's vibration rate. Because a given Earth (and by extension the matter and energy originating from it) has harmonic overtones in its vibration rate, the "vibration waves" would also possess these overtones and be able to be "received" by worlds in its Harmonic Sequence. Hence, only worlds in a given Earth's Primary System and those presently in transition would be susceptible to these "vibration waves." Just as radio signals become weaker over greater distances, the closer the world is to the originating dimension in the Harmonic Sequence, the "stronger" the vibration waves would be.

But granting vibrations the property of the recording and transmission of information, how would receiving such information affect another world's reality? After all, to use our radio wave analogy, the reception of sound via radio waves hardly causes the matter that the radio is made of to change. The most logical explanation seems to be that the bombardment of "vibration waves" on a given Harmonic Earth affects probability. In other words, if any given event (such as Carter being elected President) intrinsically has a 50% chance of occurring, the "vibration waves" containing information of another Earth's reality, warps the probability field such that a given event has a greater than 50% chance of occurring. In other words, it is not so much a causal relationship between events on Harmonic Earths as a general trend that reality on Harmonic Earths take.[3]

We shall call the subtle influence that "vibration waves" have on the reality of Harmonic Earths the REFLECTION/ECHO EFFECT. Let us now examine some of the questions that the Reflection/Echo Effect may help answer.

Certain worlds are in transition at all times. Worlds that are in transition with one another during Presidential elections and other changes in political office such as resignations and assassinations would be susceptible to the Reflection/Echo Effect. We have no way of determining which parallel Earth originated the "vibrational broadcast," but we do know that Earth-M, Earth-One, and Earth-Real (among a multitude of others, for all we know) ended up with counterparts of the same Presidential candidate taking office in 1977 — Jimmy Carter. Thus we surmise that the three parallel Earths were in transition at some time or other during the Presidential campaign, and the Reflection/Echo effect precipitated the necessary factors that led to Carter's victory. The worlds need not have remained in transition during the entire campaign, nor need they all have been in transition at the same time. It is important to note that an identical set of circumstances does **not** have to occur to obtain a similar result. For example, on Earth-Real, Richard Nixon resigned from the Presidency, while on Earth-M, he committed suicide in the garb of **Number One**, the head of the Secret Empire.[4] Factors that affect only one Reality Line — such as **Howard the Duck**'s Presidential bid in 1976 Earth-M,[5] altered events somewhat for that world, but not enough to preclude Carter's victory.[6]

How might the Reflection/Echo Effect account for the vast similarities in the superhero population of Earths-One and -Two? The stickler is: Why did it take 20 years for the similarities to manifest themselves? While it is possible that the "vibration waves" underwent some sort of "flux" while traversing the inter-dimensional medium, the fact that there are so many commonalities between the Earths discounts too much distortion.[7] The most probable explanation would seem to be that it took a good deal of time not for the Reflection/Echo to travel between parallel Earths, but rather for the effect to manifest itself.

Let's look at the major Earth-One/Two counterparts individually. There was approximately a twenty year interval between the arrivals of the **Supermen** of the two worlds. It does not seem too likely that the Reflection/Echo Effect would have had any influence on Krypton, well outside of Earth's Phenomenal Field, affecting the infant **Kal-El**'s arrival on Earth.[8] But once the

1. Mark Gruenwald, **A Treatise on Reality in Comic Literature**, (Oshkosh; Alternity Enterprises, 1976), p.35.

2. Another possibility is that the very inter-dimensional medium itself is that which transmits the information. See H. Broertjes' "Ethereality, Divergence, Diversifals" in this issue's **Forum**.

3. This lends support to the idea that one can determine whether Earths are in the same Primary System by looking at similarities in reality. It would also mean that the closer the parallel Earth's vibration rate is to another's, the more similar its reality would tend to remain.

4. **CAPTAIN AMERICA** No. 144.

5. **HOWARD THE DUCK** Nos. 7-9.

6. There have also been parallel Earths documented which were apparently not in transition during Presidential elections, and hence saw different candidates elected in the White House. Notably, the **Squadron Supreme**'s Earth-Q where Hubert Humphrey was elected in 1968 (**AVENGERS** No. 85) and Nelson Rockefeller was President in 1976 (**AVENGERS** Nos. 147-149).

7. The effects of fractional dimensions' "vibration waves" would be negligible since, having no rates in common in their Harmonic Sequence, they could not be "actual" to one another.

8. We must assume here that Krypton did not explode at the precise same instant for the **Supermen** who were later to arrive on Earths-One and Two. It need not necessarily have been at twenty year intervals since the

child was on Earth within the Phenomenal Field, the R/E Effect could help determine certain facets of **Superman**'s reality, such as the fact that he was given the name "Clark Kent" by both John and Mary Kent on Earth-Two, and by Jonathan and Martha Kent on Earth-One twenty years later.

Batman, too, has the same real name on both worlds, although it is impossible that the Bruce Waynes are true counterparts due to their vast age discrepancy.[9] While young Bruce's birth may not be under the influence of Reflection/Echoes, the events of his crimefighting origin — Joe Chill murdering the Waynes on the street, Bruce vowing to avenge them, Bruce deciding to take the guise of a bat — clearly are.

Wonder Woman may well be a true counterpart assuming that she's immortal as Amazons claim to be. The events of each counterpart's life may well have occurred concurrently, and not separated by a twenty-year span.[10]

In the cases of the other major counterparts — **Flash**, **Green Lantern**, **Atom**, and **Hawkman**, we have different people on the two Earths happening to assume the same names and in all but one case, equivalent powers. Barry Allen deliberately took the name, "**Flash**," inspired by the comic book which he later learned recorded real events and people on Earth-Two.[11] Whether there is any connection between Barry Allen's lightning-bolted chemical bath and Jay Garrick's hard water fume inhalation is not evident. It may well be no more than coincidence that different accidents produced similar results twenty years apart.

The **Green Lanterns** of the two Earths are a special case: Hal Jordan did not choose the name of his costumed alias, it being the name of the intergalactic enforcement arm of the **Guardians**. Perhaps Alan Scott of Earth-Two was influenced by the unrecorded passage of a **Green Lantern** on Earth-One in the 1940's to assume the name he did.[12]

As for **Hawkman**, it's hard to determine if the fact that the reincarnated Prince Khufu was named Carter Hall had anything to do with a Thanagarian policer officer being named Katar Hol. Like with **Superman** and **Green Lantern**, we are dealing with events in other Phenomenal Fields which eventually impinged upon Earth reality. It seems certain that the Egyptian cult of the hawk of millenia ago had little to do with the Thanagarian police force using hawks as their symbols. Yet, there must be some connection between the two **Hawkmen**, to judge by their strikingly similar uniforms.[13]

Although one must be careful not to give the Reflection/Echo Effect too much credit for similarities between counterpart heroes, it is safe to assert that the grouping of these heroes (along with non-counterparts) as the **Justice Society** of Earth-Two and the **Justice League** of Earth-One is too similar to be left to mere chance.

The superhumans of Earth-Three would also appear to be Reflection/Echoes of the same basic types.[14] The history of Earth-Three also bears examination, due to its many striking contrasts to the history of Earth-Real. Some events such as a man named Columbus discovering Europe, or a man named Lincoln assassinating President Booth are such reverse-image distortions of Earth-Real's history, they are almost parodies. One might be tempted to credit the Reflection/Echo Effect as providing the standard from which this Reality perfectly deviated. However, the great number of significant reversals (the most notable being the growth of civilization in North America rather than Eurasia) strongly suggests that some sort of omniscient/omnipotent force was at work, intentionally convoluting history. The Earth-Three counterparts are not really "reverse-images" of the Earth-One/Two heroes, their only major distinction being that they are using their abilities for self-gain.

The Reflection/Echo Effect might serve to explain another phenomenon connected with dimension and time travel, the so-called "time storm." Time storms appear to be some sort of turbulence in the inter-dimensional medium, its precise cause and nature indeterminate. Perhaps time storms are caused by the collisions of vibrational echoes — "static on the airwaves," as it were. The more worlds in transition at a given instant, the greater the amount of "static."

The Omniversal Theory's assertion that "random differences accumulate tending to make independent realities more dissimiliar," fails to take into account the great number of commonalities between independent Realities. These commonalities are too pervasive to dismiss as coincidences. The Reflection/Echo Effect, as it has been described here, can account for this oversight without altering any of the Omniversal Theory's basic postulates.■

art by jim booras

rocket in one continuum may not have taken the same course, or was delayed along the way, or something. We do know that the Earth-Two **Superman** left Krypton as an infant, while the Earth-One **Superman** was about four years old.

9. A true counterpart being two persons who were once the same person before their Earths diverged. Bruce Wayne's parents are probably not true counterparts either due to their age discrepancy.

10. It has still not been established if the **Wonder Woman** of Earth-One also first journeyed to the "Man's World" during World War II as the Earth-Two **WW** did.

11. The Reflection/Echo Effect might also explain how writers get insights into other realities. They may actually be using their minds as a radio, tuning in on the "radio waves" emanating from other dimensions.

12. This is assuming that the **Guardians** or their counterparts had nothing to do with the landing of the meteor from which the original lantern was fashioned.

13. As in the case of **Green Lantern**, it is possible that the Thanagarians entered Earth's Phenomenal Field in the 1940's and their reality unconsciously inspired Carter Hall's costume design.

14. **Superman**-Ultraman, **Batman**-Owlman, **Flash**-Johnny Quick, **Green Lantern**-Power Ring, **Wonder Woman**-Super Woman.

"Although our current scientific techniques are incapable of doing more than sending solid objects through three-dimensional space, the laws of higher physics provide, at least theoretically, for there to be an infinite number of dimensions intersecting, overlapping, and co-existing."

— J. Allen Hyneck
Professor of Astronomy
Northwestern University
(quoted in **PLAYBOY**, August 1977)

CASE STUDIES: SCIENCE FICTION

by DAVID A. TRUESDALE Art by DOROTHY DONOHUE

Although the Omniversal Theory is derived from data gleaned from comic books, it purports to encompass all conceivable parallel dimensions within its system. If the Omniverse is this all-inclusive, it must of necessity extend itself to include not only those tales of heroes in the comic book medium, but also those myriad characters who exist in the realm of prose called science fiction. Indeed, both comic books and science fiction pay homage to the same parentage — the human capacity to dream.

The three works of science fiction discussed below have a common theme basic to the heart of fictional reality — the Alternate World. We will examine each work to see how, if at all, its premises fit into the Omniverse as it has been defined.

In **THE MAN WHO FOLDED HIMSELF** (Random House, 1973), author David Gerrold postulates a system of Reality Lines that come into being due to a single entity, one Daniel Eakins. Through the continued operation of a "timebelt" given him upon the death of his uncle, Eakins finds that every time he makes a time jump into the past — no matter how small — he causes a Divergent Factor that creates a new Reality Line. This "tampering with the timestream," as it is referred to in the book, causes Eakins' personal reality to become very complicated. For one thing, nearly every time jump results in his diverging a counterpart self, until there are scores of Daniel Eakins, all with some degree of variation from the original, hopping about on the timestream with their timebelts . . . For another, the present he returns to is always determined by the net effect of his actions in the past. Although it is possible to "undo" the past as far as his personal reality is concerned,[1] he finds it impossible to simplify and get back to a previous state or place.[2]

The fundamental premise of **THE MAN WHO FOLDED HIMSELF** is that time travelers are Diversifals (to use Omniversal terminology): every move that a time traveler makes outside his/her rightful chronological niche causes reality to diverge the instant he/she materializes in the timestream.[3] As explained in the text:

> "If there was only one timestream, then paradoxes would be possible and time travel would have to be impossible. But every time you make a change in the timestream, no matter how slight, you are creating another timestream . . . You aren't really jumping through time, that's an illusion; what you are doing is leaving one timestream and jumping to — no, creating — another. The second one is identical to the one you left, including all of the changes you made in it — up to the point of your appearance. At that moment you have changed the second timestream into a different timestream. Your mere existence in it is a change."[4]

While the time jump in itself causes the divergence, it is Eakins' actions that determine how drastic the difference in reality is between the world and the one he started from. The greater the difference Eakins makes in reality, the more dissimilar a counterpart he produces.

THE MAN WHO FOLDED HIMSELF establishes a good vocabulary for the associated phenomena of time travel. **Tangling** is when one intentionally alters a situation through one's actions the second time around. **Excising** is where one returns from an undesireable future tangent to talk one's self out of making the decision that caused that Reality to come about. **Timeskimming** is taking time jumps "in a controlled out-of-phase relationship with the real-time universe,"[5] which would, in effect, allow one to control the perceived rate of time. Timeskimming enables one to be an intangible observer of real-world events. **Timestopping** is the freeze-frame effect that enables the traveler to orient him/herself before reinserting him/herself in real-time.

The origin of the wondrous timebelt forever remains a mystery to Eakins, but he comes up with a number of theories. Perhaps, he conjectures, he is the translinear beneficiary of the person who invented the belt and excised his world so the belt wouldn't be created by anyone else. Or perhaps it was created by a no-longer-existent nation that hoped to set up a dictatorship through history until their descendents found a way to excise it. Or perhaps a company is manufacturing them like cheap radios so one need only go to a department store to buy one. "As far as the home timeline is concerned, all those people using timebelts have simply disappeared. As far as each subjective traveler knows, he's rewriting all of time. It makes no difference either way;

1. There will still be a counterpart who has to live in that "undone" reality, according to both the book, and the Omniversal Theory.

2. The book uses the analogy of a painter: if he makes a mistake, he can paint over it so that no one but he knows what's underneath. But the canvas will be physically different from if he had never painted over it.

3. While the Omniversal Theory does not definitely state that every time jump causes a divergence, it also says nothing to negate the possibility. There is insufficient evidence in the comics to make such an assertion.

4. Gerrold, p. 59.

5. **Ibid.**, p. 86.

the number of alternate universes is infinite."[6]

Time travelers would be in a subjective world of their own continual making, independent from everyone but one's own counterparts. It is implied that each original time traveler would be in a Primary System all their own, unable to meet any belt-possessor but themselves.

Soon after Eakins began to time travel, he learned that unless he recorded the coordinates of each time jump, he would be unable to find the vicinity of his original Reality. And although he might find the vicinity, it would be impossible for him to get back to the Reality (or "timestream") that existed before he first began to use the belt. Not that it wasn't there,[7] it was simply that he was unable to set foot in it again since the mere act of going to it via timebelt[8] caused it to change. However, Eakins found it was possible to approximate the Reality of his original timestream. So, to use as a reference point, he fashioned a temporal niche corresponding to 1976 in a world not dissimiliar to the one he originated in.

6. **Ibid.**, p. 96.
7. Alternate Realities exist where Eakins never got the timebelt.
8. And what other way is there?

As should be obvious to any student of Reality, the time travel tenets illustrated in **THE MAN WHO FOLDED HIMSELF** are strikingly similar to those of the Omniversal Theory. The major distinction between them is Gerrold's book does not go into the technical aspect of time/dimension travel (i.e. its vibrational basis), concentrating on the ramifications of its practical side. However, the basic premise (the multiplicity of reality caused by time travel) and the reported phenomena are easily described by the Omniversal Theory's vibrational vocabulary. The timebelt would generate Chronal Displacement Inertia, and it is this energy that causes the Reality it impinges upon to diverge to the next harmonic levels. Timeskimming would be traveling at unactualized vibration rates.

The major differences between the Omniversal Theory and **THE MAN WHO FOLDED HIMSELF** are the assertions that it is impossible to ever return to one's home Reality, and that a time traveler becomes lost in a world of his own devise, unable to interact with other travelers. The logic system of time travel expounded in **THE MAN WHO FOLDED HIMSELF** applies its tenets most rigorously, moreso than evidence in the comics will allow the Omniversal Theory to. Dealing with time travel phenomena in a multi-dimensional framework as thoroughly as it does, **THE MAN WHO FOLDED HIMSELF** stands as one of the most Omniversal books written.

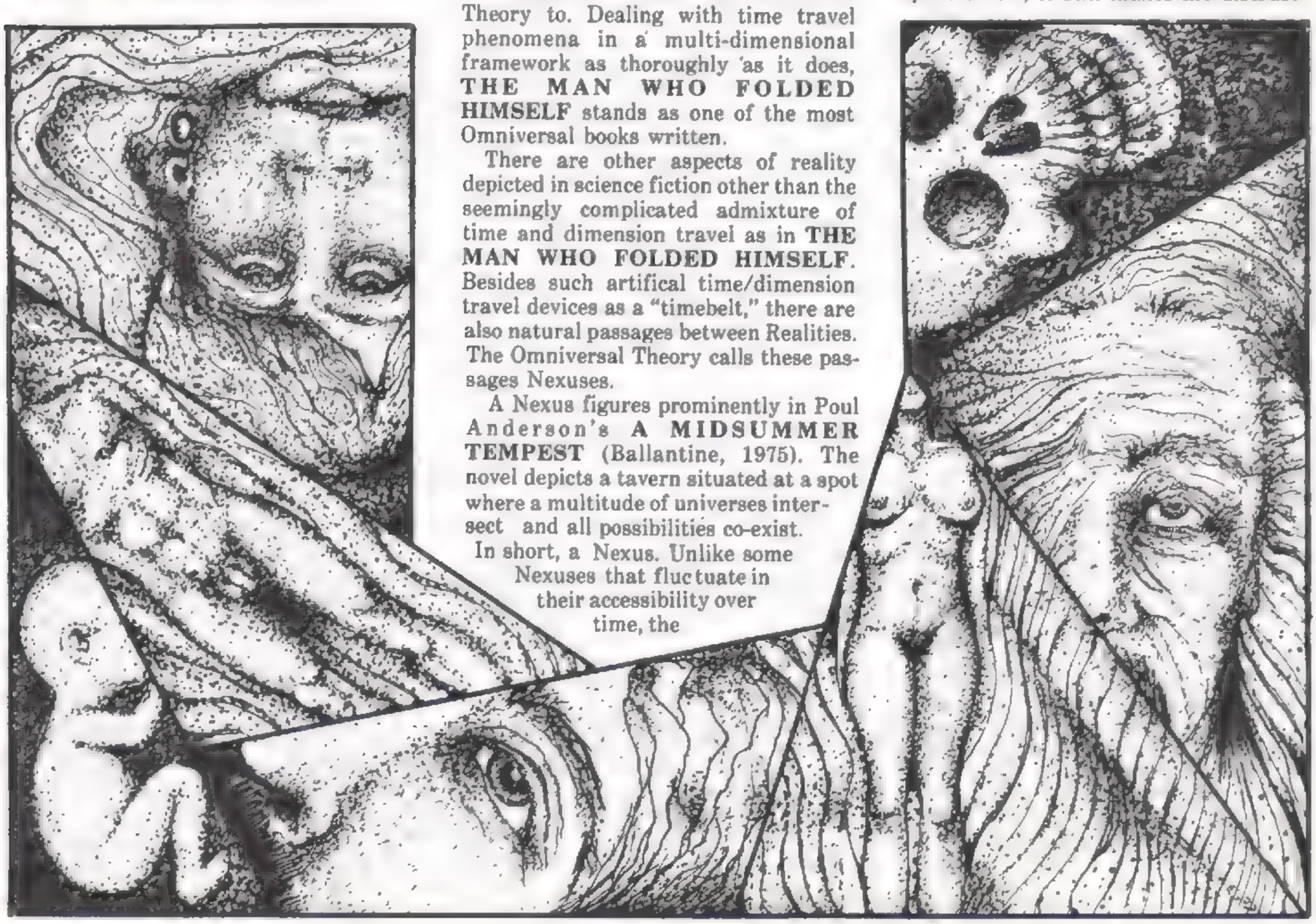
There are other aspects of reality depicted in science fiction other than the seemingly complicated admixture of time and dimension travel as in **THE MAN WHO FOLDED HIMSELF.** Besides such artifical time/dimension travel devices as a "timebelt," there are also natural passages between Realities. The Omniversal Theory calls these passages Nexuses.

A Nexus figures prominently in Poul Anderson's **A MIDSUMMER TEMPEST** (Ballantine, 1975). The novel depicts a tavern situated at a spot where a multitude of universes intersect and all possibilities co-exist. In short, a Nexus. Unlike some Nexuses that fluctuate in their accessibility over time, the Nexus in **A MIDSUMMER TEMPEST** is in perpetual alignment with other Realities, permitting continual access to travelers from other times and places.

A MIDSUMMER TEMPEST postulates a Reality Line where every word Shakespeare wrote was true. Rather than being the Bard, he was the Great Historian. Here, what are anachronisms in Shakespeare's work in reference to our Reality are not: the locomotive and several other attendant scientific advances are in evidence some 200 years ahead of the time they appeared in our Reality.

In its depiction of a Reality Line where the fictional works of Shakespeare are literally true, **A MIDSUMMER TEMPEST** supports the Omniversal Theory's major premise, "All fiction is real somewhere."

In Fritz Leiber's Hugo and Nebula Award-winning short story *"Catch That Zeppelin,"* (Contained in **THE 1976 ANNUAL WORLD'S BEST SF**, DAW Books No. 192, May 1976), the unnamed protagonist finds himself shifted to a Reality Line where Hitler is a hero, the Germans have won World War II, and blimps are the primary mode of mass transit. The character explains how this dimension travel came about: "At black moments, of which at my age I have quite a few, it still makes me distrust



profoundly those absolute boundaries in Space and Time which are our sole protection against Chaos, and fear that my mind — no, my entire individual existence — may at any moment at all and without warning whatsoever be blown by a sudden gust of Cosmic Wind to an entirely different spot in a Universe of Infinite Possibilities. Or, rather, into another Universe altogether."[9]

And why does it happen? Is the hero just spontaneously reattuned at another dimension, or is he perhaps "blown" through some transient Nexus? Where is this Nexus? *"Catch That Zeppelin"* suggests that the human mind itself may be a Nexus — or rather a Focal Point that will become a Nexus at a Time of Conjunction. However, there is no way to know when one's own Time of Conjunction with another Reality will come.

The protagonist speculates: "As to why it all happened to me, and what particular mechanism was involved, well, I am convinced that every man or woman has rare brief moments of extreme sensitivity, or rather vulnerability, when his mind and entire being may be blown by the Change Winds to Somewhere Else. And then, by what I call the Law of the Conservation of Reality, blown back again."[10]

This Law of the Conservation of Reality would well be able to account for the tendency of the dimension traveler to return to the vicinity of his/her point of origin. Further verification would be necessary before it could replace the antithetical Non-Homeostatic Property.[11] The Conservation of Reality principle may have other factors involved — such as the method of dimension travel used.

We have just examined three works whose premises are germane to the study of fictional reality. The questions arise: Are they consistent? Can they fit into the Omniverse? Should all depictions of reality be consistent?

Unlike the fictional universes depicted in comic books, which purport to be in common for many characters and the series in which they appear, the fictional universes in science fiction need only encompass a single story. In light of this, should we expect that a self-contained fictional universe can be correlated into a construct such as the Omniverse, derived from information in a more eclectic source? The Omniversal Theory's basic foundation is that "All fiction is real somewhere in the Omniverse" — hence, any depiction of reality could be assigned its own universe or multiverse and nestled off into its own corner of the continuum.

What we must do is catalogue the many depictions of time and dimensions in science fiction, and compare them to the treatment of reality in comics. Perhaps, in so doing the parameters of the Omniverse will become clearer. ■

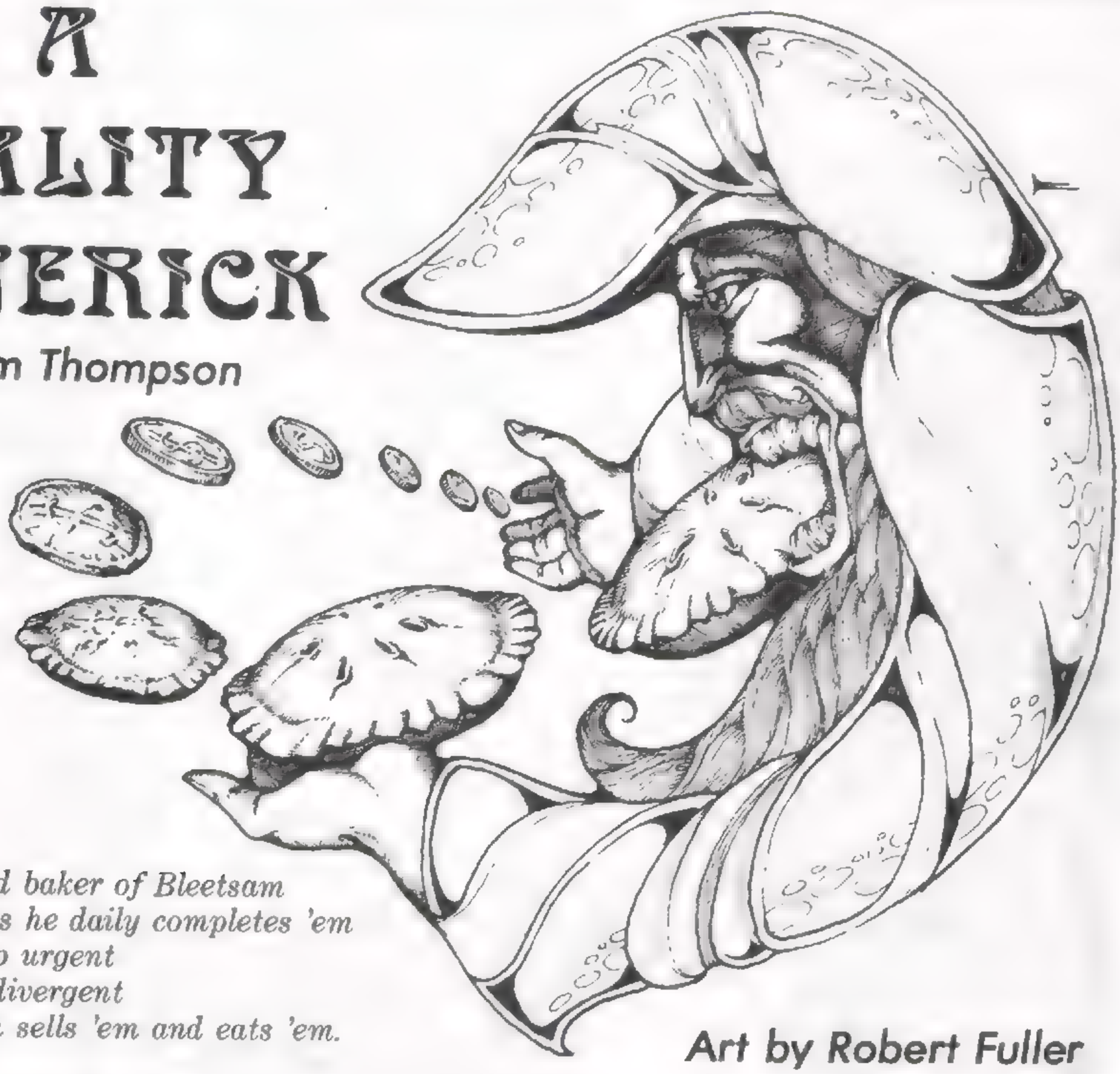
9. Leiber, p. 13.

10. Ibid.

11. The tendency of matter to not prefer any given state of being (vibration rate) over another.

A Reality Limerick

by Kim Thompson



There is an old baker of Bleetsam
who for pies as he daily completes 'em
feels hunger so urgent
his line went divergent
and so he both sells 'em and eats 'em.

Art by Robert Fuller

CASE STUDIES: COMICS

by MARK GRUENWALD

Scarcely a month goes by without the publication of a new comic book story whose premise deals with some aspect of fictional reality. This column will stay abreast of current comics by reviewing them in light of their reality depiction. Several factors will be taken into consideration in each review. First, **intrinsic consistency**: does the story contain contradictions, lapses, or logical loopholes? Second, **extrinsic continuity**: is the story consistent with previously established events and characters? And third, the **Omniversal Theory**: does the story fit into the framework of the simplest synthesis of the most knowns?

The seeming problem with something designed to be as all-inclusive as the Omniversal Theory is that it encompasses the "good" stories and the "bad," the well-wrought with the hackneyed, the careful with the flagrant. After all, if the Omniverse has room for everything to be real, doesn't that grant equal validity to all stories, regardless of their merits?

By no means do all stories (as written) readily fit into the Omniverse as it has been described. It sometimes requires massive reinterpretations of phenomena to award a given story a place in a rational system of co-existent realities. The excuse that a given story takes place on its own Reality Line to explain its inconsistencies is a cop-out if the story is not upfront about it, stating in effect, "The story you are about to read is true, but not for the characters you read about in last month's issue."

This column, then, will determine which stories are Omniversally sound as written, which ones have to be reinterpreted, and which had best be ignored. After each case study, we will assign a Reality Rating, assessing the story's overall depiction of reality. Our scale shall be:

- A: Enhances continuity or illuminates some new facet of reality.
- B: Despite some minor oversights, solid in its depiction of reality.
- C: Major problems in its depiction of reality, but still explainable.
- D: Detrimental to the reader's understanding of reality.

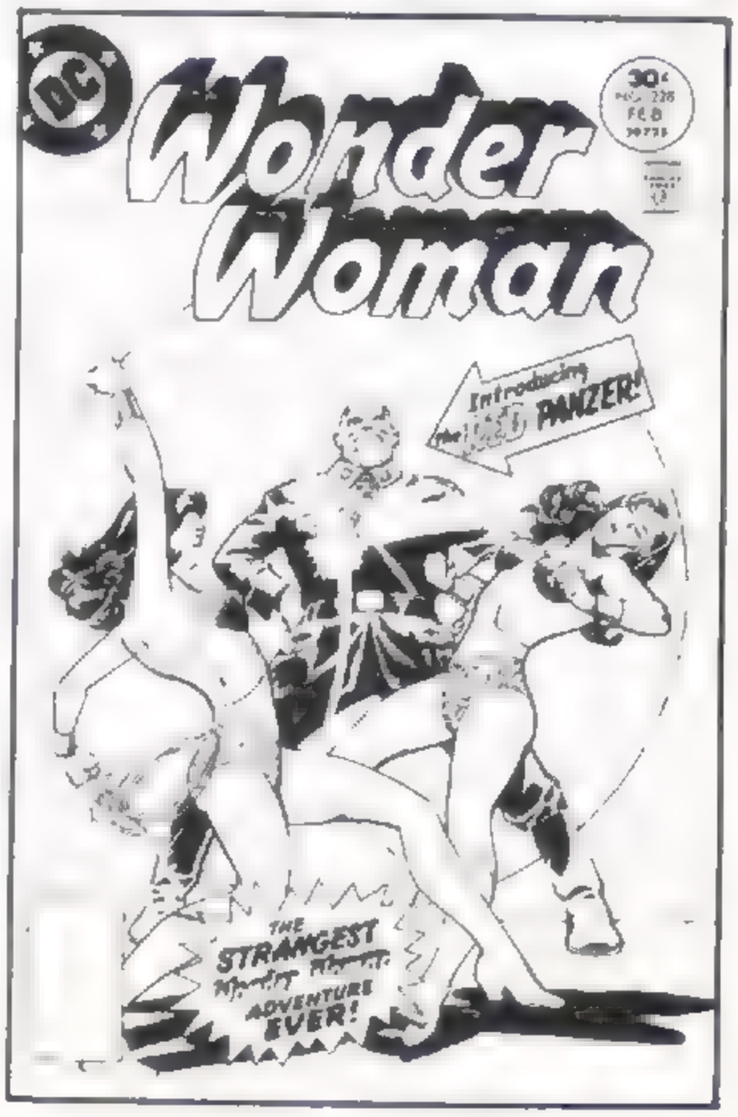
Let us begin. . .

MIGHTY THOR ANNUAL No. 5, "*War of the Gods,*" by Steve Englehart, 1976, Marvel.

The story of a war between the two major races of gods — the Olympians and the Asgardians — could have been an epic of cosmic proportions. **THOR ANNUAL** No.5 was not. In fact, it perpetrates some myths about mythology that are incongruous with mainstream Marvel reality.

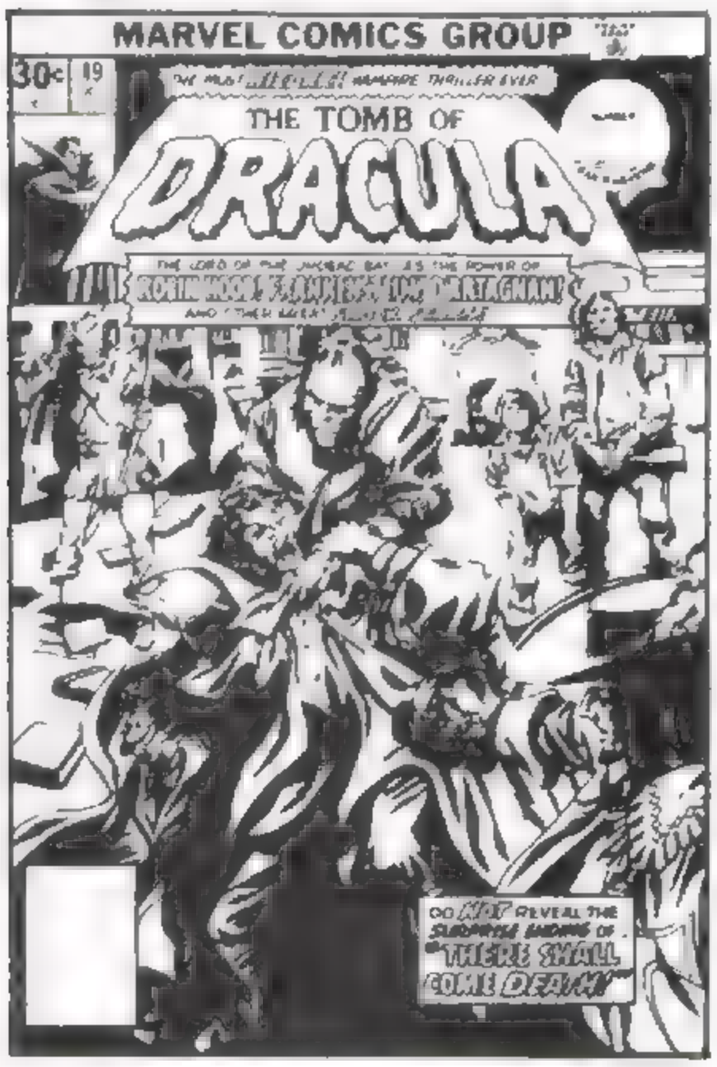
THOR ANNUAL No. 5 portrays the gods of Olympus and Asgard as "fantasy" beings whose reality is sustained by mankind's belief in them. But the Marvel Universe is not a "fantasy" universe, it is a "scientific" one. On Marvel-Earth, the gods of antiquity (Norse, Greco-Roman, Egyptian, Judeo-Christian, et al.) are not mental/spiritual constructs of humanity (as they seem to be on Earth-Real) but rather, incarnate, otherworldly or other-dimensional humanoids. Not actively seeking worshippers, they would not need belief to sustain their existence.

THOR ANNUAL No. 5 begins with a prologue, *"Dawn of the Gods,"* which eloquently recaps the legendary origin of the universe in Norse mythology. But this was not the origin of the universe in Marvel mythology. How could it have been if the Olympians, also real to Marvel-Earth, have a different legendary beginning to all things. The tale would have done well to have two



prologues, Creation according to the Norse and according to the Greeks, and then have **Odin** and **Zeus** sitting back discussing them, saying, "We sure have inspired Earthfolk to make up pretty tales about us, haven't we?" Then a third prologue, the true, non-legendary account of how the two star-born god-races evolved and came to Earth.[2] Then after the prologues, the two races could have some quarrel over conflicting ideologies or such.

Since the story had been set in ancient times, it would have been redeeming if there had been no mention of modern Marvel heroes. Then one could dismiss the whole thing as a tale of dimensional counterparts to the Olympians and Asgardians of the Marvel mythos. But no — there is a panel where the **Norn Queen** shows **Thor** a vision of the future depicting the **Avengers**.



THOR ANNUAL No. 5 poses continuity problems with the Marvel cosmology which can only be reconciled by critics.

Reality Rating: C.

1. A case could be presented asserting that gods need the belief of mortal men in order to traverse their Reality Lines, but not to exist.
2. An attempt to do just that appeared in **CAPTAIN MARVEL** No. 31.

WONDER WOMAN No. 228, *"Retreat to Tomorrow,"* by Martin Pasko, February 1977, DC.

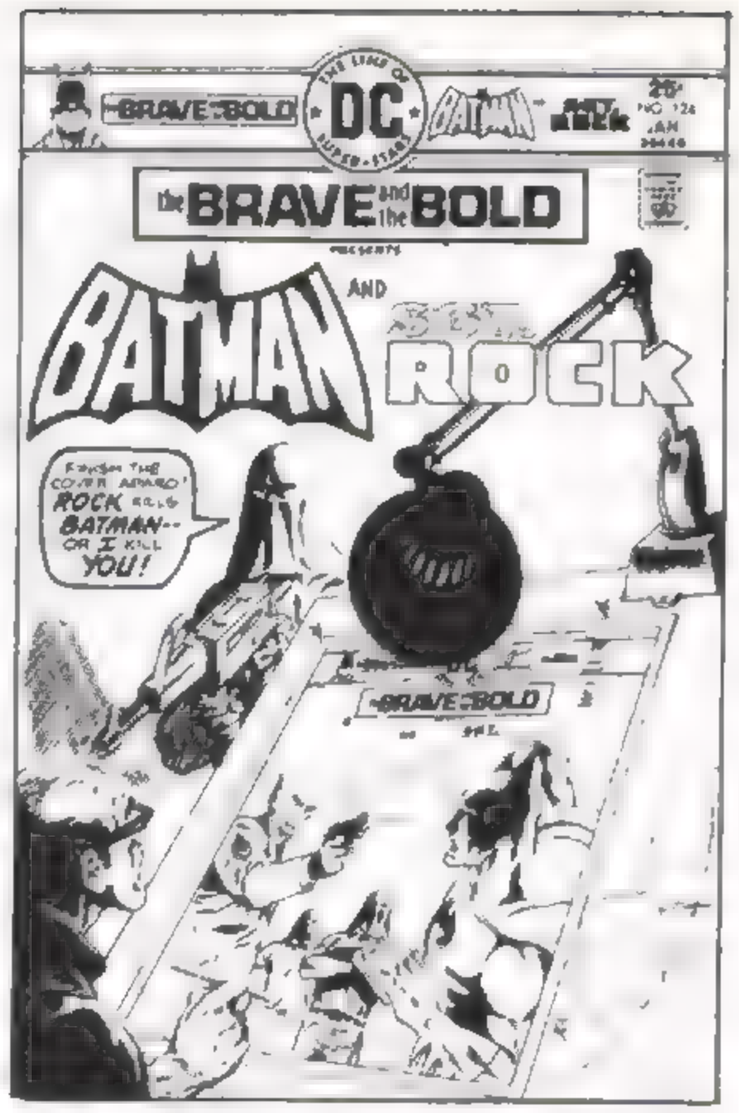
WONDER WOMAN No. 228 features the segue between the chronicles of the Earth-One **Wonder Woman** 1976 and the Earth-Two **Wonder Woman** 1943. A Nazi scientist calling himself the **Red Panzer** invents an aircraft capable of time travel into the future, and seeks to change the future by preventing D-Day from happening. However, due to a mechanical malfunction, the craft overshoots its mark and materializes in 1976 where it attracts the attention of the Earth-One **Wonder Woman**. Battling aboard the **Panzer**'s ship, **Wonder Woman** is whisked back to 1943 when a pre-set mechanism jerks the craft back to its own time. There **Wonder Woman** meets her Earth-Two counterpart for the first time[1] and with her aid, is enabled to return to 1976 by jury-rigging the **Panzer** ship. As **Wonder Woman**-1976 disappears from sight, the **WONDER WOMAN** magazine picks up with the adventures of the Earth-Two Amazon.

The most noteworthy aspect of the story is that it provides concrete evidence to support the Omniversal concept of Sideways Slippage, the tendency of a time traveler to advance along a tangent that intersects a number of different future realities at given dates.[2] The **Panzer**'s time travel method was so crude that a thirty-three year jump forward brought him into the future of another parallel Earth than his own! Hence the angle of Sideways Slippage for his method was quite severe.

The story does contain a number of minor flaws that mar its overall solidity: 1) An explanatory diagram asserts that "Superheroes did not appear on Earth-One for twenty to thirty years after they appeared on Earth-Two."[3] In point of fact, a number of Earth-One heroes have been known to exist in the 1940's, including **Wildcat**, **Vigilante**, **Zatara**, **Air Wave**, and the **Guardian** and the **Newsboy Legion**. One would be correct in saying that the superheroes on Earth-One in the 40's were not as numerous as on Earth-Two. 2) What the **Panzer** hoped to accomplish by traveling into the future to change the present was never intimated. 3) A number of misleading statements are made by characters in the story. The **Panzer** states, "For just as no one can exist in two places at once, neither can a person co-exist with herself in the past."[4] The **Panzer** can be excused for his lack of insight into the dimensional nature of time travel (after all, look how crude his time-ship is). But having the statement stand unchallenged reinforces misconceptions in the general reader's mind. The Earth-One **Wonder Woman** also makes a rather unusual statement: "Why, I wasn't even born in 1943!"[5] For one thing, as legend would have it, **Wonder Woman** wasn't born at all, but molded from clay Pygmalion-style. For another, previous accounts of her origin implied her conception was concurrent with the Golden Age of Greece. The fact that she appears to be in her mid-twenties in 1976 is because the immortal Amazons do not age, not that she is chronologically young.[6]

Still, these flaws do not seriously impair the artfulness of **WONDER WOMAN** No. 228's transition between Earth-One and Earth-Two adventures.

Reality Rating: **B**.



1. Their subsequent meeting was two decades later in **JUSTICE LEAGUE** No. 100.
2. See **TORICL**, pp. 48-51 or the **Primer**, pp. 21-22 for a more detailed explanation of Sideways Slippage.
3. **WONDER WOMAN** No. 228, p. 7.
4. **Ibid**, p. 6
5. **Ibid**, p. 7.
6. It has even been suggested that the **Wonder Women** of Earths -One and -Two are true counterparts (rather than nominal), that they were once the same being before a divergence centuries ago.

TOMB OF DRACULA No. 49, *"And With the Word Shall Come Death,"* by Marv Wolfman, October 1976, Marvel.

TOMB OF DRACULA No. 49 explores the hazy boundary between objective and subjective reality. In a moment of reveries **Dracula** finds himself teleported into a library by a woman whose mind has apparently brought into being her favorite characters from literature. But while the **Frankenstein** monster, **D'Artagnan**, **Tom Sawyer**, **Robin Hood**, and **Zorro** acknowledge the woman, Angie Turner, as being their creator, **Dracula** knows otherwise. He does not know, however, how she was able to effect her teleportation.

When **Dracula** "kills" some of her "fictional" friends, Angie banishes him from whence he came by burning the Bram Stoker novel bearing his legend. In the last scene, we learn that Angie is actually a mental patient in a padded cell.

Dracula, in this context, is an objectively real person who finds himself in another's dream. **Dracula** himself is not dreaming, however: he actually disappears to judge by his wife's dismay. The "fictional" characters seem to be subjectively real — mental manifestations of Angie's mind who admit to being mere figments.

Does Angie have two discrete abilities then — to animate mental images in a dream reality, and to teleport actual beings (like **Dracula**) into the recesses of her subconscious? Is she able to hypnotize **Dracula** into living in her own fantasies? Or has she just one power, to summon objectively real persons from whatever Reality Line they're on to populate her dreams? If so, why do all save **Dracula** acknowledge her as their creator? **Dracula** and Angie may not even be on the same Reality Line (Marvel-Earth) since her cell is never defined as such.

One senses that the questions posed in **TOMB OF DRACULA** No. 49 are deliberate. Unfortunately, the story is misleading in that it implies that beings such as **Tom Sawyer** et al. are only fictional. For the intents and purposes of this story, they may be mere figments, but somewhere in the Omniverse, all "fiction" is real.

Reality Rating: **B**.

BRAVE & BOLD No. 124, *"Small War of the Super-Rifles,"* by Bob Haney, January 1976, DC.

BRAVE & BOLD No. 124 deals with the relationship of the storyteller to the reality of the story he tells. As such, it immediately joins the ranks of such stories as those in **FLASH** No. 123, **FLASH** No. 228, **MAN-THING** No. 22. But whereas these latter-cited tales have some degree of internal logic, **B & B** No. 124 is confounding.

The basic premise is that the terrorists depicted in the script that **BRAVE & BOLD** artist Jim Aparo is illustrating try to force him to draw the death of **Batman**. Supposedly, the instant it is drawn, it will happen. The first question that is left begging is: Where does the story take place?

It cannot take place on Earth-One, for the comic writers of Earth-One do not have the ability to shape the reality of the world they're in. It can't be Earth-Prime, because one of its distinguishing characteristics is its lack of superheroes.[1] Unless dimension travel was employed but not shown, one has to postulate a Reality Line where writers are influencing their own reality.

It is necessary at this point to examine this notion more throroughly. The contention that a writer has any influence on the events he writes about stems solely from **FLASH** No. 228 (*"The Day I Saved The Life of the Flash"*) by Cary Bates.[2] In the story, Bates depicts himself as traveling from his native Earth-Prime to Earth-One where the **Flash** lives and as being able to control certain events there. Accepting Bates' claim to a "plotting power" at face value, **TORICL** makes no generalization that all writers have such ability, and perhaps Bates has the mutant ability of being able to actualize his thoughts (at least while on Earth-One). Yet if one re-examines the story, certain discrepancies lead to a new conclusion: Bates is not causing events to occur by willing them into existence.[3] Rather, he is becoming precognitively aware of them.[4] It is only his vanity that convolutes the cause/effect relationship.

With the discrediting of **FLASH** No. 228's assertion of the "plotting power" for writers, the theory that writers influence reality has no foundation.[5] Why then, does writer/participant Bob Haney believe he is controlling the **Batman**'s life? Even Bates did not assert that he controlled events on his own Reality Line.

As it is written, **BRAVE & BOLD** No. 124 can only be banished to "Earth-B," a realm where the deliberate inconsistencies of maverick writers need not be incorporated into the mainstream mythos. Consignment to "Earth-B" should only be used as a last resort, when conventional reinterpretation would have to be used extensively to save a story's verisimilitude.

Reality Rating: **D**.

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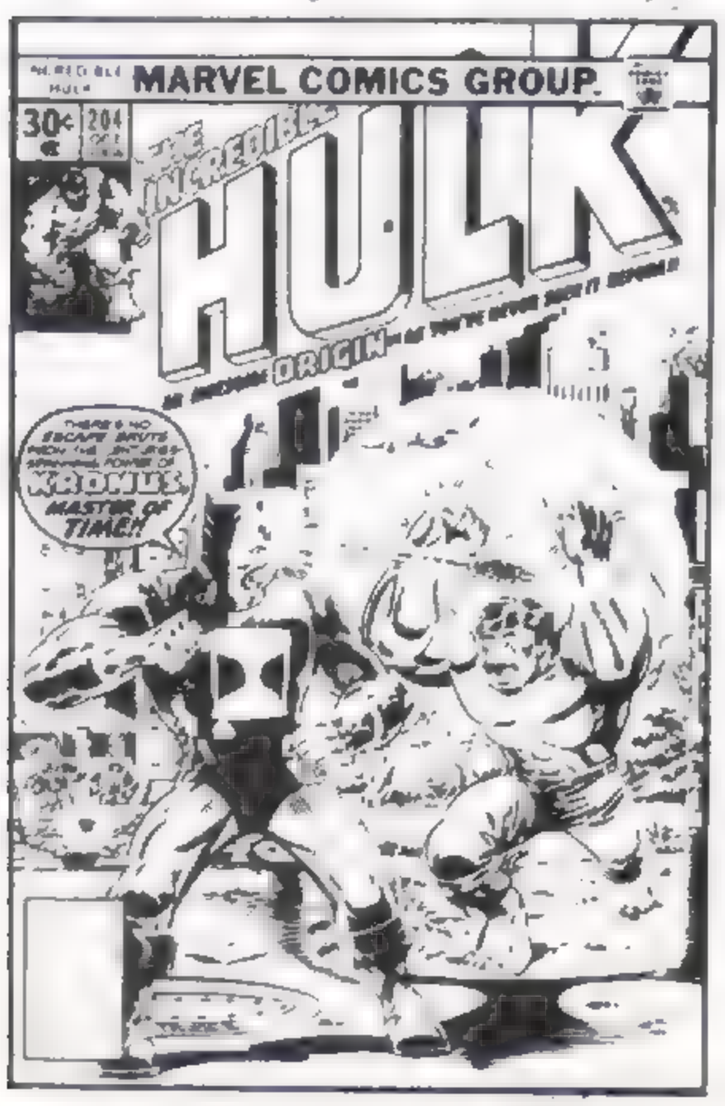
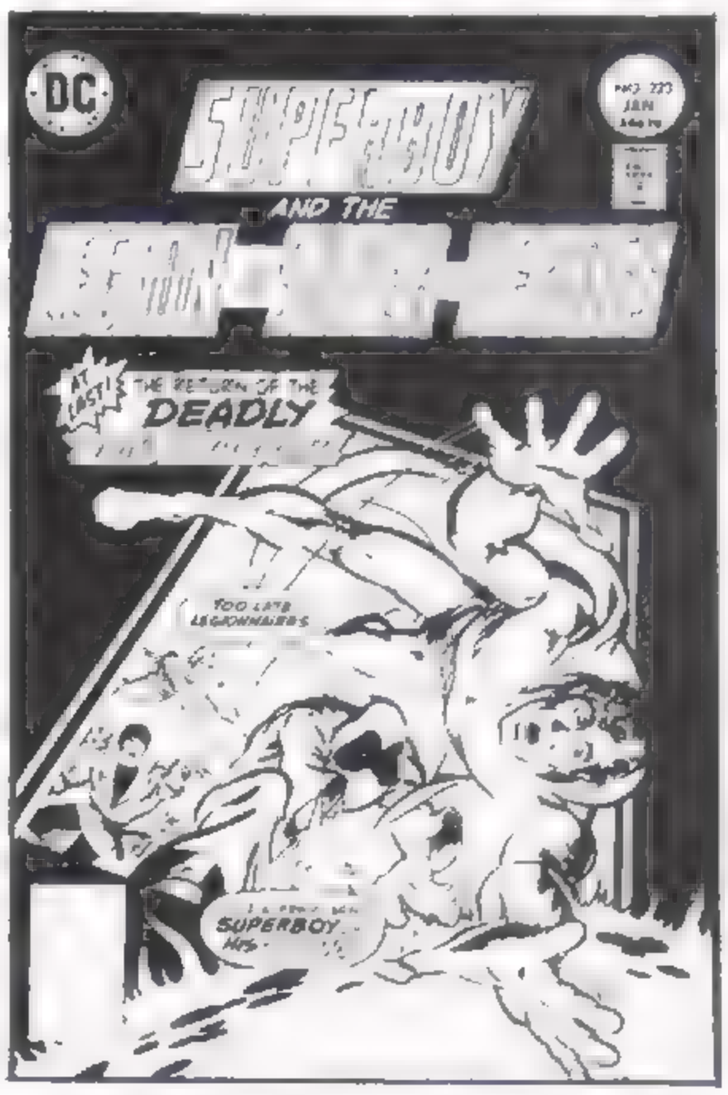
1. **FLASH** No. 179.
2. The premise is also the basis for **JUSTICE LEAGUE** No. 123-124, but there Bates power is apparently augmented by the **Wizard**'s magic.
3. **See Reality Spotlight on the Flash in this issue for further discussion of this story.**
4. As such, the distinction **TORICL** makes bewteen Earth-Prime and Earth-Real must be accordingly redefined. Earth-Prime ought still be considered the reality line where writers who claim to participate in their characters' stories are from.
5. Also see D. Mullaney's *"The Imagination Fallacy,"* in this issue's **Forum**.



HULK No. 204. *"Vicious Circle,"* by Herb Trimpe and Len Wein, October 1976, Marvel.

Certain cliches in time travel stories never seem to die, they just come back with new details like a vicious circle. Take, for example, this plot: "hero tries to change the past/is successful/decides he likes it the original way better/changes it back." And so we have **HULK** No. 204, where a machine invented by **Kerwin Kronus** sends Bruce Banner back to the fateful hour in which Banner became the **Hulk**. This time, however, Banner is armed with the fore-knowledge of what will happen, and can seek to avert it.

The loopholes in the premise begin to mount. First, we have no proof that Banner time traveled at all since no one in 1962 seemed to notice that he looked fifteen years older. Second, if Banner-1976 physically returned to 1962, where was Banner-1962? Did the machine cause them to exchange places? Did it simply send Banner-1976's memories back to his 1962 counterpart? None of these obvious questions are addressed.



In the revised scenario, Rick Jones is killed by the gamma bomb when Banner decides not to risk rescuing him.[1] Banner then finds himself on an alternate Reality Line (just what one expects when one deliberately causes the past to diverge) where he feels guilty that Jones is dead, is married to Betty Ross, and has a dream that **Kronus** is a supervillain. One wonders why the real **Kronus**, being a time expert, didn't anticipate that tampering with the past would simply displace Banner rather than change the present.[2]

Next Banner decides to relive his origin a third time in order to get back to his own Reality Line. This was not only risky (he might have died in the explosion like Jones did) but unnecessary. Why would he assume that doing it yet again would put him on his rightful (i.e., former) Reality Line? "Banner saving Jones precognitively knowing what will happen if he doesn't" is not the same as

"Banner saving Jones with no foreknowledge," and will **not** necessarily produce identical futures. By reliving it a third time, he created still another Reality Line.

In the end, however, he apparently made it back to his own 1976 reality with the conviction that saving Jones and becoming the **Hulk** is better than letting Jones die. One wonders why Banner didn't try to both save Jones and stop from becoming the **Hulk** on the third go-around, since there are hardly but two outcomes to that specific incident.[1]

In the final toll, **HULK** No. 204 is permeated with discrepancies too extensive to be worth the effort explaining. The most probable explanation is that **Kronus**' machine was actually designed to induce hallucinations.

Reality Rating: **D**.

1. Why didn't Jones turn into the **Hulk** under the identical set of circumstances?

2. From the Omniversal perspective, nothing can truly be undone, the undoing is merely another possibility.

3. In fact, another outcome is depicted in **WHAT IF?** No. 2.

SUPERBOY No. 223, *"We Can't Escape the Trap in Time,"* by Jim Shooter, January 1977, DC.

SUPERBOY No. 223 features one of the most intelligent time travel stories in comics history. The basic premise is the enigmatic **Time-Trapper** teleports five members of the **Legion of Super-Heroes** to his stronghold where he has created a field of suspended timeflow. There he tells the **Legionnaires,** "From every point in time, there are many possible futures...an infinite number...each with its own irrevocable past history. I learned that the possibility of my ruling the universe exists only in possible futures where you five do not exist. So if I am to make (those) possible futures my reality, I must eliminate you."[1] Then ensues a battle where the **Trapper** takes on the **Legion** members individually, able to best them by disorientation and displacement in time. In the end, **Superboy** and **Saturn Girl** realize that the **Trapper** is deriving his power from the stoppage of time, and break the mechanism that is doing it.

Commendable aspects of the story include: 1) When the **Legionnaires** are returned to the instant after their battle in suspended time, they still remember the alternate reality they had glimpsed.[2] 2) In the end, they admit that although the **Time-Trapper** perished as he predicted in the future tangent they had been in, his demise occurred only in one particular possible future, and that would not affect the myriad alternate selves that make up the entity called the **Time-Trapper.**[3] 3) The **Time-Trapper** was depicted as being aware of the various alternatives that could materialize for his reality, and knew that he could not hope to rule in all possible alternatives.

SUPERBOY No. 223, unlike the vast majority of time travel stories in comics, fully applies the parallel dimension concept to time travel.

Reality Rating: **A**.

1. **SUPERBOY** No. 223, p. 8.

2. Unlike a similar denouement in **THOR** No. 240.

MARVEL TWO IN ONE ANNUAL No. 1, *"Their Name is Legion,"* by Roy Thomas, 1976, Marvel.

MARVEL TWO IN ONE No. 20, *"Showdown at Sea,"* by Roy Thomas, October 1976, Marvel.

This two-parter resurrects the fallacy last seen in **SUPERBOY** No. 198[1] that an object placed in the past can have selective consequences in the present of a given Reality Line. In this case, a cylinder of vibranium from the present enables the Nazis to build a super-weapon. The existence of this weapon causes aspects of Marvel-Earth's present reality to be "undone."

As Omniversalists are well aware, a Divergent Factor introduced into the past (the vibranium capsule in this case) will only cause an alternate present to come into existence, not selectively change a given present.

We have two possible explanations for the observed phenomenon: 1) Something in 1946 acted as a long-range "unactualizer," converting the two buildings to a vibration rate that did not correspond to the rest of Marvel-Earth's,[2] or 2) Holding the vibranium capsule while still on the time/dimension platform, Ben Grimm slipped to a Reality Line where the World Trade Center and Empire State Building did not exist.

The presence of the **Watcher** is an enigma. If he is Omniversally aware as he is depicted as in the **WHAT IF?** book, why would he be so concerned that a new Reality Line sprang into existence that he would implicitly send the **Thing** to investigate? One hopes that misleading premises to precipitate time travel will disappear like the World Trade Center.

Reality Rating: **D**.

1. Cary Bates, *"The Fatal Flaw Who Twisted Time,"* analyzed on p. 58 of **TORICL**.

2. The same explanation we used for **SUPERBOY** No. 198

MARVEL TWO IN ONE No. 21, *"Black Sun Lives,"* by Bill Mantlo, November 1976, Marvel.

MARVEL TWO IN ONE No. 21 takes a dubious premise — the teaming of the **Thing** and **Doc Savage**, and makes it work. After following two parallel plot-threads, where the daughter and the wife of a famous astronomer seek the aid of the **Fantastic Four** and **Doc Savage**, the forty-year interval between incidents is bridged. The Sky Cannon, drawing its power from a black hole, creates a temporal field that catapults **Doc Savage** and crew to 1976. The time travel technique, using a black hole to generate Chronal Displacement Inertia, was credibly presented, and the story was free of the time travel cliches that plagued the previous issue.

Reality Rating: **B**.

SHADE THE CHANGING MAN No. 1, *"Escape to Battleground Earth,"* by Steve Ditko and Mike Fleisher, June-July 1977, DC.

SHADE THE CHANGING MAN No. 2, *"The Forms of Destruction,"* by Steve Ditko and Mike Fleisher, August-September 1977, DC.

SHADE THE CHANGING MAN relates the saga of **Rac Shade**, a

discredited secret agent on the scientifically-advanced parallel dimension of Meta. Escaping to Earth by a freak accident, **Shade** dons the illegal M-vest, which endows him with a forcefield that both distorts his image and protects him from bodily harm, and sets out to clear his name of the treason/murder charge that he was to be executed for. In pursuit is his former fiancee, **Mellu** who mistakenly seeks vengeance on him for the supposed crippling of her parents.

The dimension of Meta does not appear to be a parallel Earth. Despite its humanoid denizens, it would probably best be classified an "alien dimension," i.e., one that does not resemble Earth in landform, history, or culture. As such, it may well be a fractional dimension, one whose vibration rate is not a whole-numbered value. This would serve to explain why the denizens of Meta must pass thru the "Zero-Zone" in order to materialize on Earth. The "Zero-Zone" would be a vibrational barrier land midway between the unrelated vibration rates of Meta and Earth. Even after passing thru this transitory realm of the "Zero-Zone," the Metans still are not material when they reach Earth: it takes their bodies a short time to acclimate. The differences between the dimensions of Earth and Meta must not be merely a matter of harmonics.

As of **SHADE** No. 2, there is still no evidence that the Earth **Shade** is on is the mainstream Earth-One. It might be nice if it weren't for a change.

Reality **Ratings: B**

WHAT IF? No. 1, *"What If Spider-Man Joined the Fantastic Four!"* by Roy Thomas, February 1977, Marvel.
WHAT IF? No. 2, *"What If the Hulk had the Brain of Bruce Banner!"* by Roy Thomas, April 1977, Marvel.
WHAT IF? No.3, *"What If the Avengers Had Never Been?"* by Jim Shooter, June 1977, Marvel.

The **WHAT IF?** magazine addends a new entry to our catalog of known parallel Earths with every bi-monthly issue. The series is narrated by **Uatu** the **Watcher**, who states, "I know all that is — most that has been — and much that will be. I have also windows into the strange parallel worlds of what might have been."[1] **Uatu** mentions in passing some of the other parallel Earths that have been previously documented in Marvel comics: the Earths of Reed Richards the **Thing**, the **Squadron Supreme**, the Nazis' World War II victory, and the future tangents of **Killraven** and **Deathlok**.[2] He also refers to **Spider-Man**'s clash with **Superman**, stating that "Doubts exist as to whether (it) took place in this time continuum or another."[3] It strikes one as odd that one who just professed to knowing "all that is" was unable to be any more definitive about it.

In **WHAT IF?** No. 1, we visit a divergent Earth where **Spider-Man** is inducted into the **Fantastic Four**, which serves to overshadow the **Invisible Girl**'s role so much that she decides to become the **Sub-mariner**'s consort. In **WHAT IF?** No. 2, the **Hulk** retains Bruce Banner's intelligence, marries Betty Ross, and becomes a research associate of Reed Richards (who had disbanded the **Fantastic Four**). When **Galactus** lands, Richards, Banner and **Prof. Xavier** merge their intellects into the **X-Man** to vanquish him. A side-effect is that Ben Grimm is trapped in his **Thing**'s body and storms off anti-socially. In **WHAT IF?** No. 3 the **Avengers** disband when the **Hulk** left the group (in **AVENGERS** No. 2). Feeling responsible, **Iron Man** forges armor for Rick Jones, Henry Pym, and Janet Van Dyne. With the aid of the **Armored Avengers**, **Iron Man** succeeds in breaking up the alliance of the **Hulk** and **Sub-mariner**, only to succumb to his bad heart.

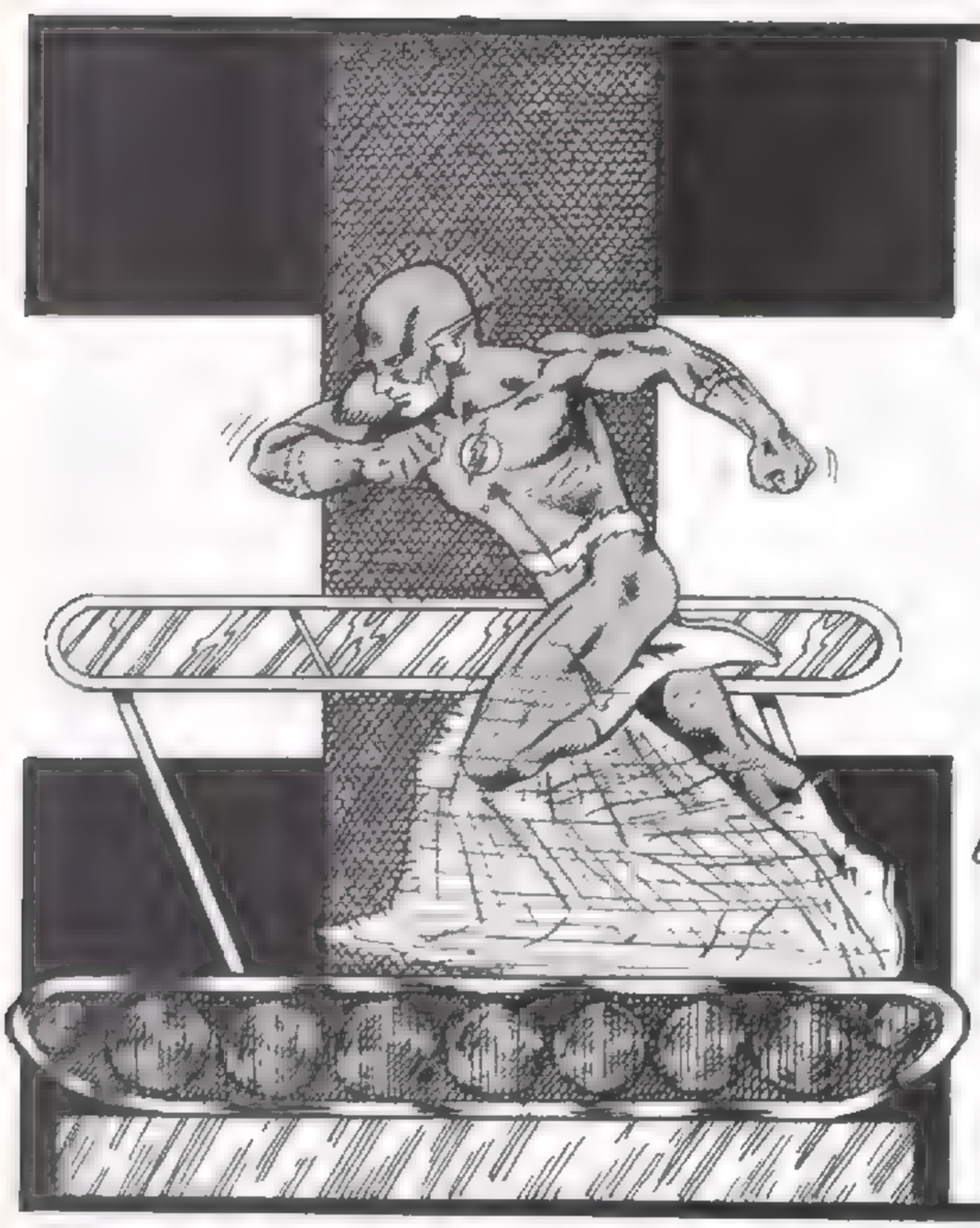
The **WHAT IF?** series' greatest virtue is its reinforcement of the concept of divergence. It is perhaps best stated in **WHAT IF?** No. 3: "...there are countless billions of worlds parallel to your own, that diverge from your continuum at critical points. And in these other realities, what might have happened on your world is, indeed, what did happen."[4] The **Watcher**'s choice of the word "critical" alludes to the idea that not every possible permutation of reality leads to a separate parallel Earth (the All the Myriad Ways Syndrome), only "significant" ones, as the Omniversal Theory asserts.

One of the most puzzling aspects of the series centers upon its narrator, **Uatu** the **Watcher**. With the possible exception of **AVENGERS** No. 101,[5] the **Watcher** has never before been depicted as being aware of alternate realities. As a matter of fact, the **Watcher**'s frequent breaking of his oath of non-interference makes no sense in the light of multi-dimensional awareness. If he is aware that significant occurences happen more than just one way, and his own interference would only cause a divergent world where he did not interfere, what would be the sense of his getting involved? In **WHAT IF?** No. 2, the **Watcher** appears to be surprised when the humans rout **Galactus** unaided: "On your world (Marvel-Earth) **Galactus** was defeated by the Ultimate Nullifier — which I, in oath-breaking concern, placed in the hands of the **Fantastic Four**. Yet now I know — as I did not then — that there was another way!"[6] This would indicate that the **Watcher**'s insight is of very recent origin. It would be interesting indeed to learn how **Uatu** learned to peer through these "windows" into other dimensions — whether it is something he discovered himself, or something that the race of **Watchers** showed him now that he is nearing maturity.

With the revelation of a new parallel Earth with every issue, Marvel should seriously consider assigning names to their worlds. ■

Reality Ratings: **WHAT IF?** No. 1 and No. 2: **B**. **WHAT IF?** No. 3: **A**.[7]

1. **WHAT IF?** No. 1, p. 1.
2. Perhaps the **Watcher** was not trying to be definitive, but he omitted Marvel's very first recorded alternate Earth, that where the **Scarlet Centurion** defeated all super-heroes in **AVENGERS ANNUAL** No. 2.
3. **Ibid.**, p. 3.
4. **WHAT IF?** No. 3, p. 3.
5. Harlan Ellison and Roy Thomas, *"Five Dooms to Save Tomorrow,"* **AVENGERS** No. 101, July 1972, Marvel.
6. **WHAT IF?** No. 2, p. 43.
7. **WHAT IF?** No. 3 deserves a higher rating than the two preceding issues by virtue of its tighter terminology about parallel dimensions.



reality spotlight on The FLASH

by dean mullaney
art by dennis jensen

Reality Spotlight is a regular feature of **OMNIVERSE**, providing overviews of entire series of comic books by cataloging all references to fictional reality made therein. In our examination of each story, we will only be concerned with the aspects of the plot intrinsic to understanding the story's concepts. We will attempt to determine how the story fits within the framework of the Omniverse, the simplest synthesis of the most knowns. In some cases, massive reinterpretation of phenomena will be needed to integrate a specific story into the greater, self-consistent whole.

The comic book character who has had more experience at time and dimension travel than any other is undoubtedly the **Flash**. Twenty-one years ago the **Flash** first "broke the time barrier" (**SHOWCASE** No. 4). Nineteen years ago he first met a being from another dimension (**SHOWCASE** No. 14). Seventeen years ago, he discovered the existence of his closest parallel Earth (**FLASH** No. 123). A great deal of knowledge about reality has derived from the **Flash**'s adventures, making him an appropriate target for our initial **Reality Spotlight**.

Before we begin, let us discuss a few basic knowns about the **Flash** and his abilities. **Flash**'s major attribute is his super-speed which enables him, among other things, to attain the hyper-light velocities necessary to generate Chronal Displacement Inertia to travel in time. **Flash**'s second major ability is his total mental mastery over his molecular structure, enabling him, among other things, to attune his vibration rate to those corresponding to other dimensions. When traveling in time, **Flash**'s molecular mastery permits him to "preset" his vibration rate to correspond to his initial rate, making it so all he must do to return "home" is to "relax his inner vibrations." **Flash** can also attain vibration rates that do not at that given Atomic Instant correspond to any actualized dimension (i.e., vibrating at an unactualized vibration rate) which affords him both invisibility and intangibility. Finally, the **Flash** has certain sensory powers, enabling him to perceive and follow "radiation trails," apparently the residue of the energy employed in vibrational and temporal reattunement.

The **Flash**'s expert control over his vibration rate allows him great latitude in traversing the different times and dimensions within the Omniverse, latitude which few other travelers are afforded. With these in mind, let us examine the chronicles of the **Flash**'s adventures in reality.

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John Broome, *"The Man Who Broke the Time Barrier,"* **SHOWCASE** No. 4, September-October 1956. The **Flash**'s first recorded adventure subsequent to his origin introduces the concept of time travel by way of controlling one's vibration rate. When **Mazdan**, a convicted thief circa 3000 AD, is placed in a "time capsule" programmed to arrive in a desolate future, a miscalculation on someone's part sends the craft to the past instead. The method the capsule used to travel through time was unspecified, although a "magnetic rod" and "heat" were mentioned as involved in the process. Seeking to return **Mazdan** to his own time, **Flash** states: "by traveling fast enough, close to the speed of light, I can set up vibrations that will project our bodies into the future." Employing his molecular mastery, the **Flash**, with **Mazdan** in tow, passes through the "mists of time" (apparently in Limbo, the trans-temporal medium) and encounters a "roadblock" **Flash** refers to as the "Time Barrier." **Flash** postulates that the "Time Barrier" did not affect **Mazdan**'s travel into the past because he was traveling in the opposite direction. This assumption, like a number of **Flash**'s through the years, seems peculiar from the lips of one who does so much time and dimension traveling. Perhaps at this early stage of his career, **Flash**'s vibrational control was not perfectly mastered, and the literal "Time Barrier" he saw this one time only was an illusion resulting from pre-conceived notions and his not completely honed abilities. It is interesting to note that the **Flash** is capable of time travel solely utilizing his own powers, and without the augmentation of the later-invented Cosmic Treadmill.

Robert Kanigher, *"Giants of the Time World,"* **SHOWCASE** No. 14, May-June 1958. When his girlfriend, Iris West, mysteriously disappears, the **Flash** suspects that the strange space craft recently sighted has kidnapped her to another dimension. Increasing his vibration rate, the **Flash** breaks the "Time Barrier" (this one not being literal) and arrives at the "fourth dimension of time," a realm where a life cycle is equal to one hour. It is unclear why **Flash** needed to travel through time to get to this parallel dimension. Due to the world's vastly different time-flow, it is not probable that it is

research assistance by ken gale and mitch itkowitz

actually some future time-era of Earth's, nor does it even seem probable that the world is in Earth's Primary System. (There is not that great a degree of time variance within one Primary System.) Again, we must attribute the vagaries to **Flash**'s inexperience at time and dimension travel.

John Broome, *"The Amazing Race Against Time,"* **FLASH** No. 107, June-July 1959. A human-like robot named **Kyri** whose speed rivals **Flash**'s own, arrives on Earth for some unspecified reason. Losing his super-speed in the process of regaining his memory, **Kyri** reveals that he was built by the bald orange-skinned humanoids called the **Rulers of the Galaxy** for the purpose of patching up "a weak spot . . . near the center of the galaxy . . where the terrible forces of another dimension threaten to break through." (p. 9.) Unable to perform his task, he entreats **Flash** to do it. Traveling via **Kyri**'s ship, **Flash** goes to the Nexus and uses his super-speed to melt rocks and minerals to form a "super cosmic glue," apparently sealing the fissure. Although **Kyri** claims that if the dimensional fabric is not repaired, "the galaxy will be destroyed," it is not likely that a mere Nexus will do it. Still, if the Nexus is into a universe whose natural conditions are hostile, leaving the Nexus agape would certainly be an astrogational hazard.

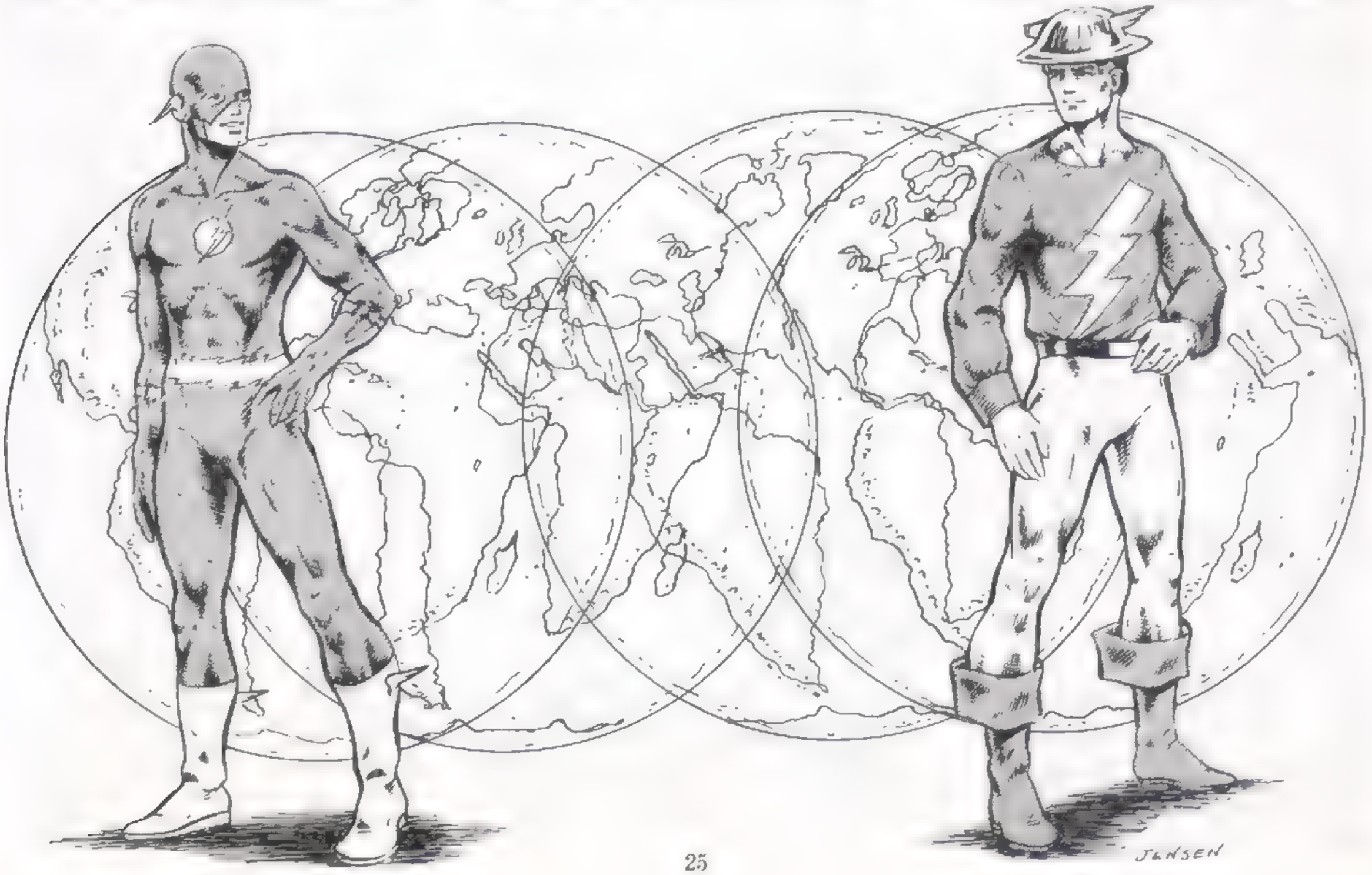
John Broome, *"Speed of Doom,"* **FLASH** No. 108, August-September 1959. Criminals from the dimension of Mohru are on Earth stealing fulgurite, from which they can distill lightning-energy endowing them with super-speed. In order to deal with **Flash**, the only person fast enough to thwart their schemes, **Kee Feleg** poses as an Earth scientist seeking to measure **Flash**'s speed. Trapped on a treadmill that forces him to run faster and faster til he perishes, **Flash** escapes by exceeding the speed of light, faster than the treadmill will run. Following the criminals through an artificial Nexus, **Flash** captures them and turns them over to the authorities. Mohru is a fractional dimension of the alien variety, to judge by the appearance of the Mohruians.

John Broome, *"The Man Who Claimed the Earth,"* **FLASH** No. 113, June-July 1960. In "the galactic universe of Olimpus in the fourth quadrangle of space" (apparently another dimension) exists a group of god-like beings who are dimensional counterparts to the gods of Olympus of Earth legend. Learning of Earth through a telescope, the leader of the Master-Engineers, **Zus**, dispatches **Po-Siden** to Earth, believing it to be the lost colony they tried to establish countless eons ago. **Po-Siden** learns that one of their ships did indeed crash on Earth millions of years ago, so he claims the planet in the name of Olimpus until the **Flash** repels him from Earth. Since the evidence that the Olimpians are the progenitors of humanity is very tenuous, it may well be that their colony may have actually been the Earth race called the Mu who returned to Earth in **JUSTICE LEAGUE** No. 88 following a galactic journey.

John Broome, *"The Man Who Stole Central City,"* **FLASH** No. 116, November 1960. **Elider**, a teacher in an unspecified parallel dimension, uses a "photo-aynch" to record a three-dimensional, moving image of the events on Earth to be used for study purposes. By some unknown method, the "photo-synch" captures light rays from one hour into the future, in effect, predicting what will happen. **Modrie**, a lab assistant of **Elider**'s world, rigs his television screen to relay the "photo-synch's" signals to employ the device for criminal purposes. Through his own "photo-synch," **Elider** witnesses **Modrie** killing the **Flash**, and warns him although he thinks it's futile. **Flash** outwits the device by moving faster than its sensors could record. If **Flash** had known about divergences, he would not have worried since the machine was capturing light from but one of many possible futures. At the end of the tale, **Elider** agrees to "permanently" close the artificial Nexus between their worlds.

JohnBroome, *"Land of the Golden Giants,"* **FLASH** No. 120, March 1961. Accompanying famous scientist Dr. Manners on an expedition to verify continental drift, the **Flash**, along with **Kid Flash**, Iris West, and the scientist's daughter are suddenly transported into a prehistoric world by the violent tremors of a volcano. **Flash** postulates that they were vibrated into Earth's past. This seems incongruous with our previous knowledge about time travel: mere vibrations alone had never before been enough to generate the Chronal Displacement Inertia necessary for time travel. In light of the fact that dinosaurs, wooly mammoths and cavemen (as well as Golden Giants) all co-exist contemporaneously here, whereas dinosaurs were long extinct by the dawn of man in Earth's history, it is probable that **Flash** and friends had actually traveled to a parallel Earth-like dimension (where said beings co-existed) rather than traveling through time. It is not incongruous with our previous knowledge to give volcanic vibrations the ability to transport between dimensions. (It is even possible that the volcano opened a Nexus between the worlds.) To return, the two **Flashes** duplicate the earthquake's vibrations.

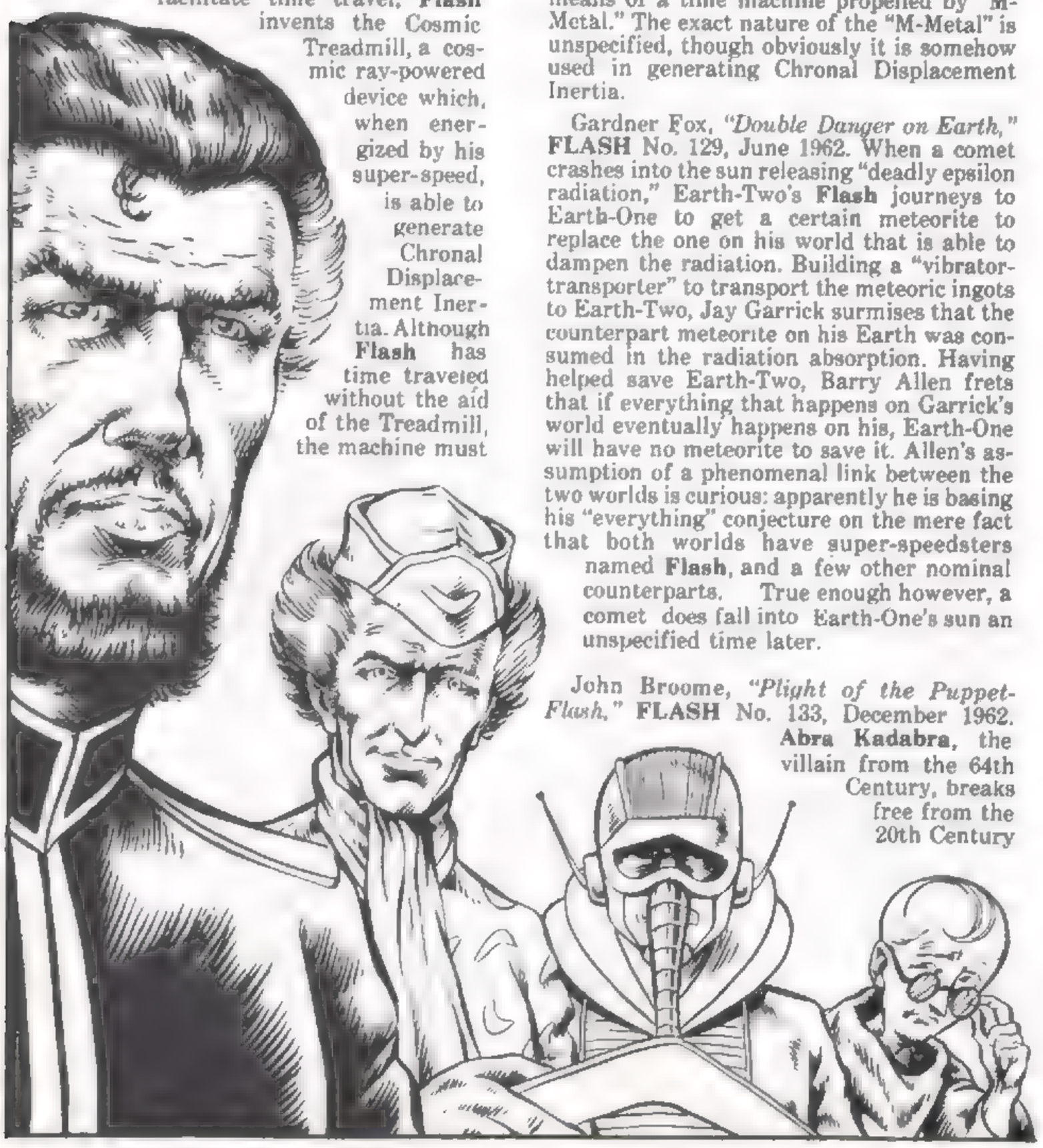
Gardner Fox, *"Flash of Two Worlds,"* **FLASH** No. 123, September 1961. While **Flash** is performing at an auditorium in Central City, he accidentally vibrates himself into another dimension. In this dimension, to be dubbed "Earth-Two" in **JLA** No. 21, lives Jay Garrick, a.k.a. the **Flash**, whose exploits had been depicted in comic books that Barry (**Flash**) Allen had read in the 1940's. Confronting Garrick, Allen tells him his theory of their parallel Earths: "My theory is, both Earths were created at the same time in two quite similar universes." (p. 9.) Allen is still unaware of the nature of divergences at this stage of his career, and so would as-



sume that Earths-One and -Two were separate from inception, rather than having diverged from the same world at some point. Explaining how he got there, Allen states: "I vibrated so fast, I tore a gap in the vibratory shields separating our worlds." Allen postulates that the Gardner Fox who wrote of Jay Garrick's adventures in Earth-One comics, "tuned in" on Earth-Two while asleep. After gaining super-speed, Allen tells Garrick that he inspired him to take the name "The **Flash**." "Destiny must have decreed there'd be a **Flash** on each Earth," Allen postulates. (p. 9.) After helping Garrick capture three of his old foes, Allen goes back to the spot at which he entered Earth-Two and vibrates back to his own world.

John Broome, *"The Space Boomerang Trap,"* **FLASH** No. 124, November 1961. The alien denizens of "a super-scientific dimension adjoining ours in the cosmos," suspect that **Captain Boomerang**'s "time-traveling boomerang" sighted in their dimensional space is designed to spy on them. When they decide to attack, **Flash**, **Elongated Man**, and **Captain Boomerang** join forces to repel them. Overpowered, the aliens "seem to disappear through a slit in space." **Flash** remarks, "By vibrating at super-speed I can bring the sub-atomic particles together in this aperture — and seal it up so that those aliens can never break through to invade Earth again." Assuming that the Nexus is artificial rather than natural, the aliens could, of course, open another at will: the fact that they have not yet done so must mean they no longer feel threatened by Earth.

John Broome, *"Conquerors of Time,"* **FLASH** No. 125, December 1961. To facilitate time travel, **Flash** invents the Cosmic Treadmill, a cosmic ray-powered device which, when energized by his super-speed, is able to generate Chronal Displacement Inertia. Although **Flash** has time traveled without the aid of the Treadmill, the machine must help guide his travel, making it more accurate. **Flash** mentions that "positive radiation" enables future travel while "negative radiation" enables past travel: what specifically this refers to is not clear. **Flash** also states that he has to maintain his internal vibrations at a specific rate in order to remain in a certain time era: to relax them would be to return to his present. This could well be a failsafe device built into the machine.



John Broome, *"Doom of the Mirror-Flash,"* **FLASH** No. 126, February 1962. While sitting in a prison barber chair, the **Mirror Master** projects himself into a "world inside mirrors, a sort of fourth dimension of our world that can only be entered through a mirror." This parallel dimension is inhabited by mind-reading Amazons calls the Orinocas, among whom the **Mirror Master** easily gains influence. Bored, he wishes to return to Earth, but finds that his mirror trick only works one way. His only hope is if the **Flash** can rescue him so he connives to lure the speedster into the dimension. **Flash** finds the mirror-entrance to the world and notes, "By vibrating my body at super-speed, I can make each molecule in my body filter past the molecules of the mirror so as to pass through it completely." Doing so, he apprehends the **Mirror Master** and using his molecular mastery, vibrates them both back to Earth. The mirror is obviously a Focal Point between Earth and the world of the Orinocas.

John Broome, *"Case of the Real-Gone Flash,"* **FLASH** No. 128, May 1962. **Abra Kadabra**, a stage magician from the 64th Century who uses futuristic science to simulate magic, travels to 20th Century by means of a time machine propelled by "M-Metal." The exact nature of the "M-Metal" is unspecified, though obviously it is somehow used in generating Chronal Displacement Inertia.

Gardner Fox, *"Double Danger on Earth,"* **FLASH** No. 129, June 1962. When a comet crashes into the sun releasing "deadly epsilon radiation," Earth-Two's **Flash** journeys to Earth-One to get a certain meteorite to replace the one on his world that is able to dampen the radiation. Building a "vibrator-transporter" to transport the meteoric ingots to Earth-Two, Jay Garrick surmises that the counterpart meteorite on his Earth was consumed in the radiation absorption. Having helped save Earth-Two, Barry Allen frets that if everything that happens on Garrick's world eventually happens on his, Earth-One will have no meteorite to save it. Allen's assumption of a phenomenal link between the two worlds is curious: apparently he is basing his "everything" conjecture on the mere fact that both worlds have super-speedsters named **Flash**, and a few other nominal counterparts. True enough however, a comet does fall into Earth-One's sun an unspecified time later.

John Broome, *"Plight of the Puppet-Flash,"* **FLASH** No. 133, December 1962. **Abra Kadabra**, the villain from the 64th Century, breaks free from the 20th Century jail cell he was imprisoned in last time, and is returned to it following his defeat.

John Broome, *"Secret of the Three Super-Weapons,"* **FLASH** No. 135, March 1963. A girl named **Ryla** from the planet Korydon in the "16th Dimension of the Cosmos" comes to Earth to look for the three super-weapons that will enable her race to defend itself from the savage Makryds. Contacted by telepathy, **Kid Flash** discovers that the mist he saw "turned into a girl — she materialized when I reached a certain rate of vibration." Obviously **Ryla** was unable to attain the vibration rate necessary to exist on Earth-One, so in order to see her, **Kid Flash** had to vibrate at a rate corresponding to her pre-actualized rate. Melting down the super-weapons, the Makryds attack Earth through an artificial Nexus. **Kid Flash**, trying to contact **Ryla**, attunes himself to the rate he met her at before, and when she does not appear, increases his vibrations until he finds that he has materialized on Korydon. Defeating the Makryds with duplicate weapons, the invaders are turned over to the peace party in their own dimension and **Kid Flash** is given an "interdimensional letter dispatcher" so he can correspond with **Ryla**.

Gardner Fox, *"Vengeance of the Immortal Villain,"* **FLASH** No. 137, June 1963. Vibrating at what he calls a Focal Point between Earths, Barry (**Flash**) Allen goes to Earth-Two to see if there is any connection between the mysterious skylights that have stopped all machinery in six major cities and the fact that these cities were the homes of the **Justice Society** members. On Earth-Two, Allen learns that similar skylights have appeared and he helps Jay Garrick battle the man behind them, the immortal **Vandal Savage**. After being rescued by the two **Flashes**, the **Justice Society** decides to come out of retirement.

John Broome, *Menace of the Reverse-Flash,"* **FLASH** No. 139, September 1963. A time satellite containing, among other things, an atomic clock and a spare **Flash** costume, is sent into the future. Learning that the atomic clock would turn into an atomic bomb due to a "nucleonic" change caused by time travel, **Flash** uses his Cosmic Treadmill to travel to its time-destination, 2463. There, **Flash** encounters **Professor Zoom**, a scientist who has amplified the residue of the super-speed patterns" (aura) contained in **Flash**'s spare costume to endow himself with super-speed. Using his powers for criminal intent, **Zoom** calls hinself the **Reverse-Flash**. Defeating **Zoom**, **Flash** deactivates the bomb, and relaxes his inner vibrations to return home. **Zoom**, needless to say, comes from one of many possible alternate futures stemming from Earth-One extant in the 25th Century.

John Broome, *"Puzzle of the Phantom Plunderers,"* **FLASH** No. 142, February 1964. Criminals from the alien dimension of Kilor called the **Ak-Zaka Gang** set up a device (its mechanics unspecified) permitting them to travel between dimensions. Traveling to Earth-One, they tap the energy of **Flash**'s aura to charge their weapons. **Flash** matches their vibration rates, travels to Kilor, and helps the authorities capture the gang.

John Broome, *"The Girl from the Super-Fast Dimension,"* **FLASH** No. 145, June 1964. Inventing a spacecraft intended for travel within her own sun system, **Doralla Kon** of the dimensional world of Alkomar, accidentally passes through a "space-time warp" (obviously a Nexus) and ends up on Earth-One. Naturally vibrating at a rate much faster than Earth-One, Alkomar is undoubtedly in another Primary System to judge by the fact the world bears no resemblance to Earth in landform or culture.

On Earth-One, **Flash** teaches **Doralla** to slow down her bodily vibrations. Unfortunately, **Doralla** finds that vibrating at this slower rate causes her body to give off a shimmer which reacting with water, causes explosions. Apparently her Harmonic Sequence is not compatible with **Flash**'s, and the two worlds were in transition at the time of her transit.

Gardner Fox, *"The Fatal Fingers of the Flash,"* **FLASH** No. 146, August 1964. To illustrate a newspaper article Iris West is planning, **Flash** uses his Cosmic Treadmill to travel 150 billion years into the future so he can photograph the sun going nova. Once there, **Flash** thinks, "So this is what Earth will be like 150 billion years from my own time," implying his lack of awareness of alternate futures.

John Broome, *"Our Enemy the Flash,"* **FLASH** No. 147, September 1964. Inventing a new element dubbed "Element Z," **Prof. Zoom** of the 25th Century, duplicates the "vibration wave patterns" of the **Flash**'s uniform, temporarily regaining super-speed. Utilizing a "well-known theory" of 25th Century science, **Zoom** sends an astral image of himself to the 20th Century where he coerces **Mr. Element** into stabilizing the element, creating "meson-radiation" which enables him to materialize in his image. Borrowing the Cosmic Treadmill, **Zoom** returns to his own era, with **Flash** in pursuit. Defeating **Zoom**, **Flash** returns home by relaxing his inner vibrations.

John Broome, *"The Flash's Sensational Risk,"* **FLASH** No. 149, December 1964. The **K-10 Gang**, criminals on the humanoid-inhabited dimensional world of Ikora, invent a kind of explosive which creates artificial Nexuses. While causing minor damage on Ikora, the explosives "increase enormously in power in traversing the dimensions." When one of the bombs causes a crater to appear on Earth, **Kid Flash** is drawn into the Nexus and materializes on Ikora. Appraising the situation, he vibrates back to Earth to enlist **Flash**'s aid. The two speedsters attain Ikora's vibration rate, arrive on the world, defeat the **K-10 Gang**, and return home.

Gardner Fox, *"Invader From the Dark Dimension,"* **FLASH** No. 151, March 1965. The villainous **Shade** discovers a "dark dimension" between Earths-One and -Two from which he can peer into both worlds. Obviously this is not a parallel Earth but a fractional dimension. The **Shade** refers to both its "alien inhabitants" (unseen) and the "terrible forces of darkness" present, which may be taken to mean magic. Whether the properties of the dimension that permit interdimensional vision are magical or alien-scientific in nature is not specified.

John Broome, *"The Mightiest Punch of All Time,"* **FLASH** No. 153, June 1965. Building his own Cosmic Treadmill in the 25th Century, **Professor Zoom** travels to the 20th Century. Using his newly developed science of "ultra-speed," **Zoom** attempts to release the latent evil in people (apparently a form of hypnosis done with radiation). Knocked unconscious by the **Flash**, **Zoom**'s inner vibrations relax, yanking him back to his own time era. **Flash** travels with **Mr. Element** via Treadmill to the 25th Century to take advantage of the advanced science of that era to undo **Zoom**'s brainwashing.

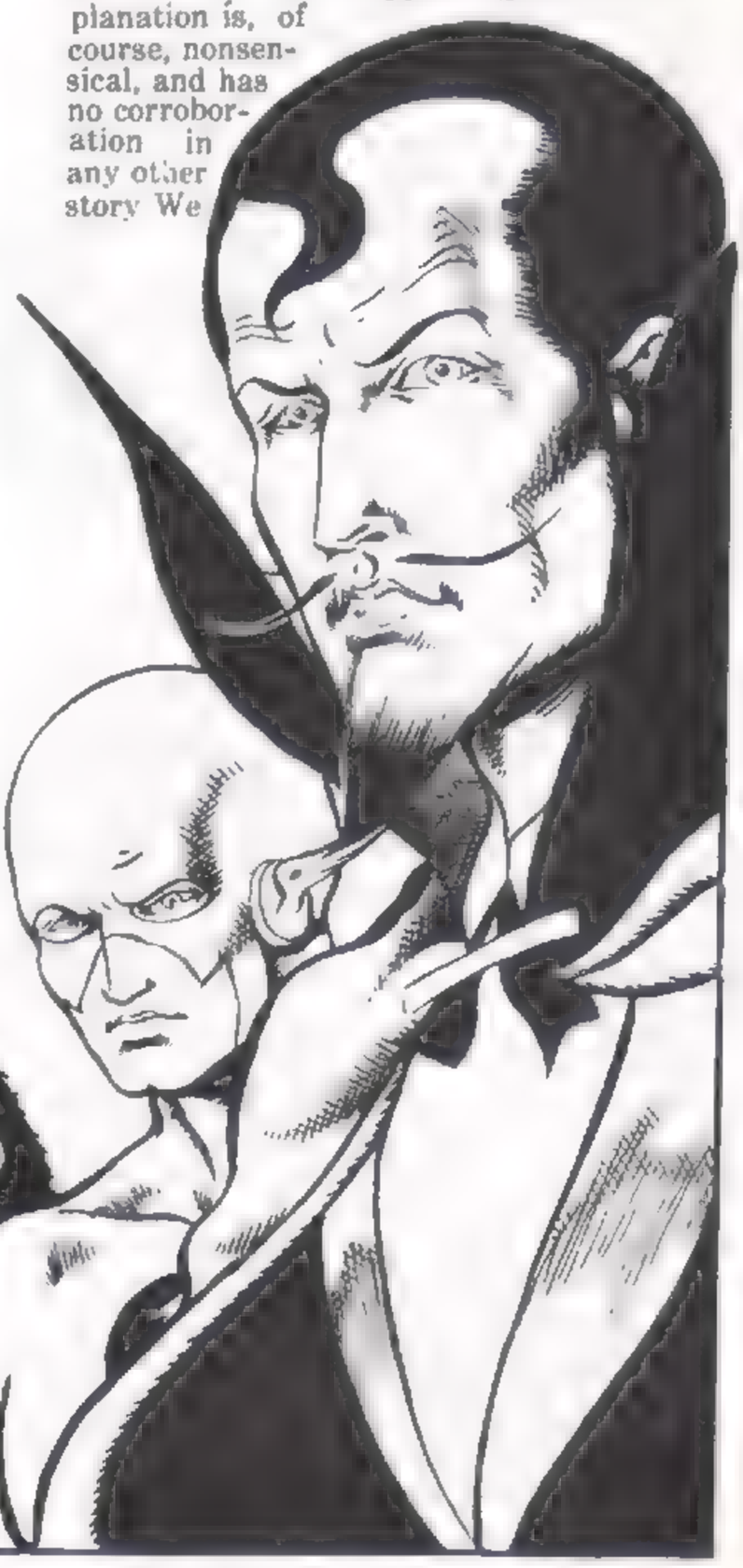
John Broome, *"The Superhero Who Betrayed the World,"* **FLASH** No. 156, November 1965. **Klkan** from the planet Gyr goes to the United Nations, demanding that **Flash** be turned over to him or he'll destroy the Earth. When **Flash** refuses to show, **Klkan** compromises his identity to the world. After collaborating with **Kid Flash** on a means to free him from the aliens' control of him whenever he exceeds a certain speed, **Flash** surrenders himself and is taken to Gyr. There, he is used to power a device to "turn back time" so that his captors can defeat the conquering Drdons. Succeeding in his task, **Flash** sends four Gyrians back in time to fight the Drdons, but having been freed from his compulsion to obey the aliens, he uses his super-speed to prevent the outcome of the battle to differ. Sent back to Earth, **Flash** uses a spraycan propellent to cancel out the dangerous atoms that threatened to destroy Earth. To prevent humanity from knowing his secret identity, **Flash** apparently builds a cosmic treadmill around the Earth in order to "turn back time" to before they learned his secret. It is, of course, preposterous to believe that **Flash** caused the entire Earth to travel into the past: not only would the amount of Chronal Displacement Inertia necessary to move such a mass be absurd, but if the Earth were to suddenly materialize where it was four days ago, the gravitational forces between the Earth that rightfully existed then and the displaced Earth would probably destroy both. The only possible way which **Flash** could "undo" the Earth's knowledge of his identity is if he himself traveled four days into the past and prevented **Klkan** from revealing it in the first place. This would, in effect, be a Divergent Factor, creating one tangent where the Earth knows **Flash**'s identity and another where he helped himself prevent it. **Flash** chose to live on the latter tangent.

Gardner Fox, *"Who Stole Flash's Super-Speed?"* **FLASH** No. 157, December 1965. A criminal scientist from the dimensional world of Alkomar (first seen in **FLASH** No. 145) named **Korakor Lok** invents a "Celeri-Nuller" which absorbs the natural super-speed factor from the dimension's inhabitants. Passing through a Nexus found in Alkomar's sun system, he travels to Earth in an attempt to steal the **Flash**'s super-speed aura as well. **Doralla Kon** travels through the Nexus via spaceship and absorbs **Flash**'s aura to prevent it from being stolen by **Lok**. Returning to Alkomar, the two restore **Flash**'s speed and destroy the Celeri-Nuller, **Flash** and **Doralla** defeat **Lok** on Earth with an Alkomarian weapon and she takes him back to her world.

Gardner Fox, *"The Flash's Final Fling,"* **FLASH** No. 159, March 1966. **Petar Thrant**, a chronal officer from an alternate future of 3780, hypnotizes the **Flash** into not using his super-speed for fear of triggering a vibrational bomb that criminal **Frand Mattar** of 3780 had planted in Central City. **Thrant** evidentally forgot about **Kid Flash**'s similar abilities, but fortunately the junior speedster's vibrating **Flash** to Earth-Two for medical assistance was not enough to activate the bomb. After **Dr. Mid-Nite** removes **Flash**'s mental block, the two speedsters demonstrate their ability to time-travel without the aid of the Treadmill by building up "compounded vibrations" to generate Chronal Displacement Inertia. Not only do they break the Time Barrier, but they find the particular alternate future 3780 in which the bomb originated (ostensibly a future of Earth-One). Unable to prevent **Mattar** from triggering the bomb, the speedsters subdue him, and race back to their own time era to contain the explosion.

Robert Kanigher, *"The Case of the Curious Costume,"* **FLASH** No. 161, May 1966. Glimpsing a turtle zooming through the streets of Central City at super-speed, **Flash** attempts to match the turtle's pace and for some reason vibrates himself into another dimension. On this unnamed world, one minute is comparable to seven hours on Earth. Despite its humanoid inhabitants, the great difference in relative time-flow places the world in another Primary System than Earth-One. **Flash** learns that the turtle, the slowest creature on its world, vibrated to Earth to race things so it could get rid of its inferiority complex.

Gardner Fox, *"The Mirror With 20-20 Vision,"* **FLASH** No. 161, May 1966. The **Mirror Master** accidentally invents a "future mirror" which distorts rays of light so as to reflect future events. He claims, "nothing can change the future as reflected in my mirror." (p. 12.) Obviously, the **Mirror Master** is unaware of alternate futures and plans accordingly. In order to thwart his foe, **Flash** uses his Treadmill to skip to three days into the future. There, as the **Mirror Master** shoots him, he relaxes his inner vibrations and returns to the present. Concealing himself for three days, **Flash** awaits the particular future to occur, and when his time-traveling counterpart disappears, he comes out of hiding and captures his foe. Explaining to Iris West what happened, **Flash** claims that he was unable to make a move against the **Mirror Master** because "Some strange natural law that governs time travel must be preventing me! What I saw must happen." (p. 9.) This explanation is, of course, nonsensical, and has no corroboration in any other story We



can surmise that **Flash**, not feeling totally confident in wilfully complicating his personal reality by short-range time-jumps, decided not to risk the unknown consequences of thwarting the future mirror's prophesy. His inability to move in the presence of his counterpart cannot be attributed to mere co-existing on the same Reality Line at the same Atomic Instant with a divergent self, or else **Flash** would have been paralyzed the instant he emerged in that time. Instead, **Flash**'s paralysis must have stemmed from the shock of witnessing a true counterpart for the first time in his career.

John Broome, *"Who Haunts the Corridor of Chills?"* **FLASH** No 162, June 1966. When the designer of the Corridor of Chills amusement ride is changed into a bird-man, **Flash** is reminded of the Ornitho-Men whom **Kid Flash** described as living on Earth 80 million years ago (**FLASH** No. 125). **Vandar Varr**, a flame-like alien who had sought out the **Ornitho-Men** in friendship eons ago had been in suspended animation inside a rock. Revived when the amusement park was built, he swore revenge on humanity for the alleged nuclear destruction of the Ornitho-Men Using the Cosmic Treadmill, **Flash** journeys to the past and films footage showing that the Ornitho-Men destroyed themselves. The extinction of a race of apparently-native bird-beings 80 million years ago was certainly a Divergent Factor in Earth-One's pre-history.

John Broome, *"The Flash Stakes His Life On You,"* **FLASH** No. 163, August 1966. Scientist **Ben Haddon** invents a radiation-device that can induce selective amnesia Learning that no one remembers who he is, **Flash** discovers that he is becoming unsolid as if he were fading from existence Confronting **Haddon**, **Flash** is told that the reality of one's existence is maintained by the belief others have in one. This subjective view of personal reality is invalid in light of an Omniverse which imbues all things with its own objective reality independent of outside control What probably occurred is that **Haddon**'s radiation also affected the **Flash**, making him subjectively feel that he was fading out of existence. **Flash**'s mastery of his molecular structure would then account for his mist-like physical appearance it would not be difficult for **Flash** to unconsciously will his molecules out of cohesion if he was losing belief in his own personal reality

John Broome, *"The Day Magic Exposed Flash's Secret Identity"* **FLASH** No. 163, August 1966. **Abra Kadabra**, the criminal legerdemainist from the 64th Century, sends a telepathic message to his own time convincing police officer **Slor Disi** that he wishes to give himself up to the authorities of his own time. **Disi** travels pastward using methods that have been well-established since the time of **Kadabra**'s time-trip years earlier. Overpowering **Disi**, **Kadabra** steals his Control-Pack, enabling him to switch bodies with the officer, among other scientific marvels. Finally captured by **Flash**, **Kadabra** is spirited back to his own time in custody.

Gardner Fox, *"The Boy Who Lost Touch With the World,"* **FLASH** No. 164, September 1966. A scientific prodigy named Tommy Davis is bathed in the vibrations emitted from the light rays he was experimenting with, and soon becomes invisible and intangible. Apparently the light rays altered Davis' vibrations to that of a pre-actualized rate where only his friend, **Kid Flash**, vibrating identically, could perceive him Encircling him, **Kid Flash** attempts to "shake off" the vibrations, in effect, using his own mastery of his vibration rate to reattune his friend's.

John Broome, *"One Bridegroom Too Many,"* **FLASH** No 165, November 1966. On the eve of his wedding, Barry (**Flash**) Allen is whisked to the 25th Century by a new mental power of **Professor Zoom**'s called "time-switch," which enables **Zoom** to exchange places To escape from the energy cell that **Zoom** was imprisoned in, **Flash** couples his vibrational powers with the shrinking chemicals used to store his uniform in his ring. Returning to his own era by his super-speed alone, **Flash** defeats **Zoom**, and the criminal is teleported back to his own time by 25th Century authorities. An Editor's Note in this story warrants special mention: "In some as yet unknown manner, exceeding the speed of light negates time travel and automatically sends the time-voyager back to his own era." (p. 14.) This statement is patently erroneous. Exceeding the speed of light does not **negate** time travel, it generates Chronal Displacement Inertia that **permits** time travel. The "automatic" return to his own era is not a function of time travel, but rather is a function of the Flash's vibrational mastery.

Gardner Fox, *"The Real Origin of the Flash,"* **FLASH** No. 167, February 1967 An other-dimensional imp named **Mopee** claims responsibility for diverting the lightning bolt into the chemicals that originally gave Barry Allen his super-speed aura. He states that it was his assignment in order to become "Initiate Forth Class of the Heavenly Helpmates." Although **Flash** apparently accepts **Mopee**'s words at face value, later stories must be referred to the imp or **Flash**'s mental image. JUSTICE LEAGUE No. 59 revealed that the incidents of **Flash**'s origin were accidental and not cosmically-controlled. The most reasonable assumption to reconcile this discrepancy is that **Mopee** is in reality an interdimensional practical joker much like **Superman**'s **Mr. Mxyzptlk**, and was testing Flash's gullibility.

John Broome, *"One of Our Green Lanterns is Missing"* **FLASH** No 168, March 1967. When Hal (**Green Lantern**) Jordan loses his memory **Flash** locates GL's invisible and intangible power battery by vibrating at the pre-actualized rate that fades its existence.

Gardner Fox, *"The Six Nothing Spells of Abra Kadabra"* **FLASH** No 170, May 1967. Escaping his 64th Century prison, **Abra Kadabra** travels back to **Flash**'s era and uses his "psychonizer" to hypnotize the speedster into not being able to perceive crime Sensing **Kadabra**'s "evil" emanations across the dimensional void, **Dr. Fate** on Earth-Two rounds up **Dr. Mid-Nite** and the Earth-Two **Flash**. Traveling to Earth-One, they help **Flash** capture **Kadabra** and return him via Treadmill to his own era.

John Broome, *"Downward Flight of the Flashes,"* **FLASH** No 173, September 1967 When Jay Garrick and his wife Joan travel to Earth-One to visit, the two **Flashes** and **Kid Flash** are teleported to the planet Vorvan in the Andromeda Galaxy by the **Golden Man** Their combined efforts defeat him.

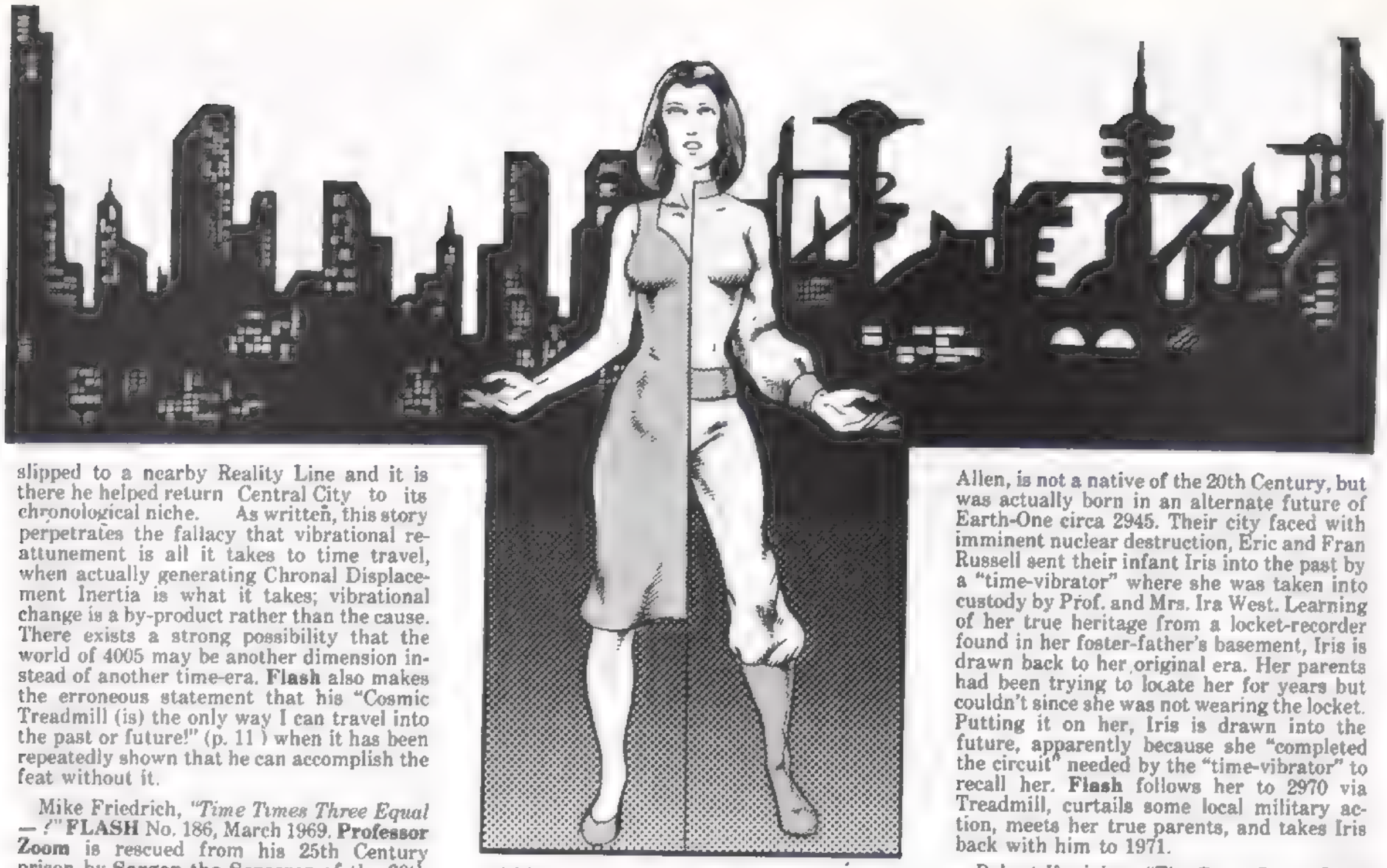
John Broome, *"Stupendous Triumph of the Six Super-Villains,"* **FLASH** No. 174, November 1967. The **Mirror Master** accidentally invents a mirror which serves as a Nexus into a parallel Earth where **Flash** is a criminal and the **Mirror Master** a crimefighter. These entities may not be true counterparts to Barry Allen and Samuel Scudder of Earth-One since we never see them unmasked All we know is that they have identical names, powers and costumes to the Earth-One entities, and reversed motivations On this unnamed Earth, the criminal-**Flash** steals the hero-**Mirror Master**'s "body switching mirror" and trades places with the **Flash** of Earth-One Placed in a cell on that parallel Earth, the **Flash** of Earth-One escapes by finding a weak-spot in the radiation-guarded cell caused by a residue of the energy-manipulation involved in vibrational re-attunement. **Flash** follows that residue back to his Earth, defeats the criminal-**Flash**, and returns him to his rightful Reality Line.

John Broome, *"Death Stalks the Flash,"* **FLASH** No. 176, February 1968 In order to break his wife's fever, **Flash** decides to enter her dreams. Recalling the sensation of a nightmare while "going at multi-light speeds . . in the spectrum of velocity," **Flash** postulates the existence of a Dream Dimension (p. 6) Accelerating, the speedster indeed finds such a realm and soon comes across Iris' dream scenario. Merging with her dream-image of him, he battles her dream-image of **Death** and vanquishes it by generating light, a side effect of what he calls his vibratory motion, but is more likely caused by his aura He returns to his own Reality and finds Iris has recovered. The existence of dimensions whose reality is shaped by the mental images of sleeping human beings (in this case, from Earth-One) is not at all unlikely. However, the outside influence upon its reality is an earmark of a dimension whose properties are dissimiliar to that of most This Dream Dimension is undoubtedly a fractional dimension whose vibration rate is near Earth-One's. To gain access to it, **Flash** did not, as he claimed, accelerate, but rather he vibrated as he would to go to any other parallel dimension.

Cary Bates, *"The Flash — Fact or Fiction,"* **FLASH** No 179, May 1968 An alien beast called a Nok escapes from alien zookeeper's transport ship and wreaks havoc on Earth-One with its whirlwind powers. Colliding with the creature, **Flash** finds himself hurled to a parallel Earth where there are no superheroes and he is just a comic book character, like Jay (**Flash**) Garrick of Earth-Two seemed to be on Earth-One. Unable to reattune his vibrations to that of Earth-One, he convinces **FLASH COMICS** editor, Julius Schwartz, to finance a Cosmic Treadmill to augment his powers Returning home, **Flash** deduces that the Nok is feeding on his aura, and duplicating his aural radiation in a gun, pacifies the beast until the zookeeper takes him away. As for why **Flash**'s customary vibrations were insufficient to free him from the parallel Earth that would be dubbed Earth-Prime in **JLA** No. 123, there are a number of possible explanations. We can rule out the possibility that Earth-Prime has natural laws that prevent vibrational reattunement since all parallel Earths are vibrational in their very nature The two most likely answers are either Earth-One and Earth-Prime were not in transition when **Flash** tried to return, or that the Nok, who was siphoning his aura, had diminished **Flash**'s vibrational capacities.

John Broome, *"The Thief Who Stole All the Money in Central City"* **FLASH** No. 182, September 1968. **Abra Kadabra** travels to the 20th Century, is defeated by the **Flash**, and is escorted back to his own time via Cosmic Treadmill.

Frank Robbins, *"Executioner of Central City,"* **FLASH** No. 184, December 1968. In an alternate future in the year 4005, anthroplogist **Dr. Yom** experiments with a "quantum-time-shift-resolver." Coincidentally creating an "ionic vacuum" in the 20th Century, **Flash** enables the device to teleport all of Central City to the future A temporary side effect, is that **Zoral**, one of **Yom**'s assistants, is displaced in the past. When her vibration rate begins to resume its former value, **Flash** hitches to 4005 with her Threatened by **Yom**, **Flash** slightly relaxes his vibration rate, going back five minutes in time, and defeats **Yom** Curiously, he does not meet his counterpart of five minutes ago. Hence we must assume Flash inadvertantly



slipped to a nearby Reality Line and it is there he helped return Central City to its chronological niche. As written, this story perpetrates the fallacy that vibrational re-attunement is all it takes to time travel, when actually generating Chronal Displacement Inertia is what it takes; vibrational change is a by-product rather than the cause. There exists a strong possibility that the world of 4005 may be another dimension instead of another time-era. **Flash** also makes the erroneous statement that his "Cosmic Treadmill (is) the only way I can travel into the past or future!" (p. 11) when it has been repeatedly shown that he can accomplish the feat without it.

Mike Friedrich, *"Time Times Three Equal — ?"* **FLASH** No. 186, March 1969. **Professor Zoom** is rescued from his 25th Century prison by **Sargon the Sorceror** of the 20th Century who somehow teleports him back to the present although he claims to want to learn about time travel from **Zoom**. Not wishing to share the secret, **Zoom** tricks the sorceror into banishing himself to Chimano, "the Domain of the Chill of Death," (undoubtedly a fractional dimension). **Sargon** uses his Ruby of Life to bring **Flash** to Chimano, where **Flash** uses his vibrational powers to return them to Earth. Trailing **Zoom** who has been committing crimes in different time eras, **Flash** uses **Sargon**'s Ruby to defeat him and returns the criminal to his own era. The method by which **Zoom** originally generated the Chronal Displacement Inertia to come to the 20th Century was not mentioned.

John Broome, *"The Death Touch of the Blue Ghost,"* **FLASH** No. 189, June 1969. When Iris Allen begins to rapidly age seemingly due to **Flash**'s vibrating through her, **Kid Flash** surmises that the blue-skinned reptilian alien he saw had something to do with it. Vibrating at the unactualized rate the aliens were glimpsed at, the **Flashes** see a starship carrying an alien race called the Azurians who are migrating across the galaxy but have stopped on Earth to refuel. Captured and placed inside body-suits designed to resist their powers, the **Flashes** claim to vibrate faster than their auras in order to generate friction to burn through the suits. This is improbable since their auras are a function of their bodies, just like their vibration rate, and one can hardly play one body function against another. More probably, they simply created friction inside the suits which made the metal hot enough to melt, their auras protecting them from burning. The two speedsters best the aliens and force them to provide a cure for the aging effect of their radiation. It is never established why the Azurians were vibrating at an unactualized rate, although there are two distinct possibilities: one is that being from outside Earth-One's Phenomenal Field they possess a different vibration rate though being within the same parallel dimension, or two, they may have willfully altered their vibration rate to a value that Earth does not possess in order to escape detection.

John Broome, *"The Bride Cast Two Shadows,"* **FLASH** No. 194, February 1970. A woman named Joan Boardman is possessed by the spirit of Elfriede Talman who died a hundred years ago. Looking in her eyes, **Flash** sees a vision of the world in which Talman lived. Allowing himself to be drawn into the "vision-world," **Flash** enacts an eerie scenario where he is married to the woman and then spirited off into the "Realm of Shades." There he battles a host of assorted demonic looking creatures and escapes through a Nexus back into his own Reality, where he finds Joan has somehow been exorcised of the spirit. It is stated that Elfriede Talman's spirit is able to venture forth from the "Realm of Shades" for a few hours once every hundred years. This implies that there is a regular Time of Conjunction occuring between Earth-One and the Realm, which has all the characteristics of a fractional dimension. We can not generalize that this "Realm of Shades" is where all spirits of dead Earth-One beings go; we only know that one did.

Mike Friedrich, *"Call It . . . Magic,"* **FLASH** No. 198, June 1970. In the midst of kissing Barry Allen during her stage act, **Zatanna** the Magician is whisked to another dimension in another time by a sorceror named **Namba** who was being possessed by his foe, **Xarkon**. Aided by his Cosmic Treadmill, **Flash** follows **Zatanna**'s residue in an attempt to aid her. **Zatanna** exorcises **Namba** with a kiss, and with another, returns **Flash** and herself to the moment they disappeared. Evidentally the exorcism and teleportation spells employed the Law of Contagion. **Namba**'s world was undoubtedly a fractional dimension.

Robert Kanigher, *"The Flash's Wife is a Two-Timer,"* **FLASH** No. 203, February 1971. **Flash** learns that his wife, Iris West Allen, is not a native of the 20th Century, but was actually born in an alternate future of Earth-One circa 2945. Their city faced with imminent nuclear destruction, Eric and Fran Russell sent their infant Iris into the past by a "time-vibrator" where she was taken into custody by Prof. and Mrs. Ira West. Learning of her true heritage from a locket-recorder found in her foster-father's basement, Iris is drawn back to her original era. Her parents had been trying to locate her for years but couldn't since she was not wearing the locket. Putting it on her, Iris is drawn into the future, apparently because she "completed the circuit" needed by the "time-vibrator" to recall her. **Flash** follows her to 2970 via Treadmill, curtails some local military action, meets her true parents, and takes Iris back with him to 1971.

Robert Kanigher, *"The Great Secret Identity Expose,"* **FLASH** No. 204, March 1971. When Iris gains the ability to read minds and a compulsion to tell the truth, the **Flash** decides to whisk her to the future she was born in to prevent her from exposing his identity. On the way via Treadmill, he learns that her locket somehow endowed her with this predicament, so he tells her to stop wearing it.

Cary Bates, *"Beyond the Speed of Life,"* **FLASH** No. 209, September 1971. While apprehending some villains, **Flash** is caught up in the backwash of a vehicle driven by an unseen being named a **Sentinel**, who takes him to a dimension of ectoplasmic matter said to exist beyond the speed (vibration rate?) that living beings can exist. Described as being at the "rim of the universe," (p. 6) it seems improbable that it exists at the edge of infinity. More likely is that this realm is some fractional dimension near Earth-One which has alien physical laws. After **Flash** defeats the illusion-casting **Devourer**, said to be "eating its way into your (**Flash**'s) universe," the **Sentinel** takes **Flash** back to Earth-One. This other-dimensional location is supported by the **Sentinel**'s statement that the creature called the **Devourer** is "eating its way into **your** universe" meaning **Flash**'s rather than **the** universe, meaning one common to both.

Cary Bates, *"An Earth Divided,"* **FLASH** No. 210, November 1971. Aided by the Cosmic Treadmill, **Flash** and Iris visit the alternate future of 2970 that Iris is from, with the intent to set up a news service. They become involved in a political struggle.

Cary Bates, *"The Flash in Cartoon-Land,"* **FLASH** No. 212, February 1972. Using a machine he calls a "Matter Creator," **Abra Kadabra** shapes the reality of a fractional dimension to be identical to that of a children's television show called "Mr. Patsy and His Purple Pixies." Drawn into the world through a Nexus on a TV screen, **Flash** and the little boy he was babysitting find a realm with inconsistent physical laws. **Kadabra**

hurls "control rods" said to be able to take away **Flash**'s ability to vibrate molecules. Of course, if the rods actually took away all of **Flash**'s vibrations, he would slip out of this dimensional-construct into the zero vibration rate of Limbo: since he didn't, we can only assume that what it did was to prevent him from changing his vibration rate from the rate it was when he was impaled by the rods. The little boy's rubber bullets striking **Flash** cause a chain reaction that returns his molecular mastery. Having programmed the dimensional-construct to "self-destruct," **Kadabra** escapes via a rocket-shaped transporter as the reality begins to unactualize. **Flash** and the boy hitch a ride on the craft, and **Flash** defeats **Kadabra**.

Len Wein, *"Death of an Immortal,"* **FLASH** No. 215, May 1972. Using a machine to create an artificial Nexus, **Vandal Savage** dispatches the **Flashes** of Earths-One and -Two to Limbo, described as "a place between places, a junction beyond reality." (p. 7) Learning that the meteor that granted his longevity had vanished there, **Savage** wants the two speedsters to retrieve it. Hurling the meteor back to Earth-Two, the **Flashes** discover that for some reason they cannot vibrate back to their parallel Earths. A being called **Tempus**, the self-proclaimed Guardian of the Timestream and one of DC's few known Omnipotents, tells the **Flashes** that the Timestream runs in a circle and they would have to travel all the way around eternity in order to get back to the "exit" home. Believing him, the **Flashes** do make the circuit and come out at the desired time and vibration rate. Like the physical Time Barrier that **Flash** encountered in his first recorded time-trip, the Timestream depicted as a circuitous river is another illusion. For one thing, the very essence of Limbo is that it is a realm where time does not pass: having a flowing river of time in Limbo is an absurdity. Second, since the flow of time is both relative and a function of each separate Reality Line in the Omniverse, there would not be one place where the time-flow for the entire continuum of universes would be phenomenally evident. **Tempus'** assertion that the only way the **Flashes** can exit from Limbo is by making a loop around the Timestream is inconsistent with scores of other tales in which Limbo, the trans-temporal medium, is shown as being traveled without difficulty. There are two possible explanations for these discrepancies: one, this was not actually Limbo (the realm of zero vibration rate) but some fractional dimension with strange natural laws, or two, it really was Limbo, but the being **Tempus**, whose origin and powers are an enigma, was controlling what the **Flashes** experienced for some undisclosed purpose.

Cary Bates, *"The Curse of the Dragon's Eye,"* **FLASH** No. 216, June 1972. **Flash** learns that it is "negative starlight" emanating from a pulsar in the Dragon Constellation that is responsible for Al Desmond's evil-doing as **Mr. Element.** Generating escape velocity from Earth, **Flash** runs about in space trying to collect this "negative starlight" in Desmond's ring. Presuming that it could only be seen at hyper-light speeds, **Flash** accelerates, absorbs some, goes back to Earth, and saves Desmond from going nova. Its nature only hinted at, "negative starlight" may be related to the "Black Sphere" negative radiation that unleashed human inhibitions in **JUSTICE LEAGUE** No. 56-57.

Steve Skeates, *"2D?,"* **FLASH** No. 216, June 1972. **Kid Flash** discovers that some blue-skinned aliens have been kidnapping college personnel to make them work in a slave labor camp. Deducing that an abstract painting is the Nexus between worlds, **Kid Flash** allows himself to be abducted, defeats the aliens, and escapes through the other side of the painting by donning the aliens' "trans-dimensional headbands."

Cary Bates, *"Green Lantern, Master Criminal of the 25th Century,"* **FLASH** No. 225, January-February 1974. In order to stop the syntho-steed rampaging in the 20th Century, **Flash** and **Green Lantern** travel via power ring to the era its from — the 25th Century. Learning that **Prof. Zoom** is responsible for the creature's creation, the super-heroes agree that if **Zoom** helps **Flash** capture the steed, **Green Lantern** will steal for him a 25th Century art object. Agreeing to do so, **Green Lantern** confronts the **Green Lantern** of that space sector in the 25th Century who attempts to stop the theft. Appearing to be destroyed by the native **Green Lantern**'s blast, the 20th Century **GL** willed his ring to return him to his proper time era should he face harm. After bringing the art object to **Zoom** in the 20th Century, it disintegrates since **GL** could not protect it from the "stresses of time travel," due to its yellow hue. It is interesting to note that the heroes had no difficulty finding **Zoom**'s particular alternate future using something other than **Flash**'s customary mode of travel there, the Treadmill.

Cary Bates, *"The Day I Saved the Life of the Flash,"* **FLASH** No. 228, July-August 1974. While traveling through some mysterious fog near Athens, Ohio on Earth-Prime, writer Cary Bates finds himself transported to the outskirts of Central City, Ohio, on Earth-One. There he witnesses the **Trickster** committing a robbery with **Flash** in pursuit, and realizes that he's on a parallel Earth "where most everything that happens in our comic books actually happens!" (p. 6) Figuring there is a connection between the fact that he was plotting a **Trickster** story and the **Trickster's** actual robbery, Bates goes to Barry Allen's home, and convincing him of his origin, offers to help the **Flash** apprehend the criminal. Bates gets the notion that he is somehow mentally causing the events to happen as they do by some sort of "plotting power" he wields. However, various textual evidence supports the conclusion that Bates is becoming precognitively aware of events, rather than causing them. Consider these statements made by Bates as participant/narrator in the story: "I had no idea what was going to happen next." (p. 8) Implication: events keep occuring even when he is not dictating them; They exist independent of any control at least some of the time. "None of the weapons I ever dreamed up for the **Trickster** can match this one." (p. 9) Implication: Bates cannot be willing the **Trickster**'s weapon into existence by his "plotting power" if he couldn't "imagine" it until he saw it in use. "I've written the **Trickster** character enough times to second guess him." (p. 10) Implication: The **Trickster** is able to act with free will; Bates

cannot control his actions but possesses some "insight" into the **Trickster** enough to outguess what he will do. Despite Bates' egocentric assertions, there is no evidence that he exerts any degree of control over the **Flash** and **Trickster**'s reality. Bates probably doesn't have a mutant "plotting power" but is a latent psychic. After helping **Flash**, Bates drives back into the fog and reappears on Earth-Prime. Bates' dimension-traveling would seem to be via some convenient natural Nexus that briefly blinked open and shut.

Cary Bates, *"The Rag Doll Runs Wild,"* **FLASH** No. 229, September-October 1974. Jay Garrick's wife, Joan, summons the **Flash** of Earth-One via a "trans-Earth signaler." Vibrating to Earth-Two at his favorite Focal Point, the Central City Community Center, **Flash** helps Jay Garrick defeat the **Rag Doll** and the **Thinker**.

Cary Bates, *"The Deadly Secret of the Flash,"* **FLASH** No. 233, May 1975. **Professor Zoom** contaminates **Flash** with "cosma-spurs," the deadliest new form of energy in the 25th Century. In order to stave off their effects, **Flash** vibrates to an unactualized rate. The cosma-spur radiation has the side effect of freezing his vibration rate in that intangible state. Causing a shockwave with his fist aimed at **Zoom**, **Flash** somehow uses **Zoom**'s vibrations to free his own.

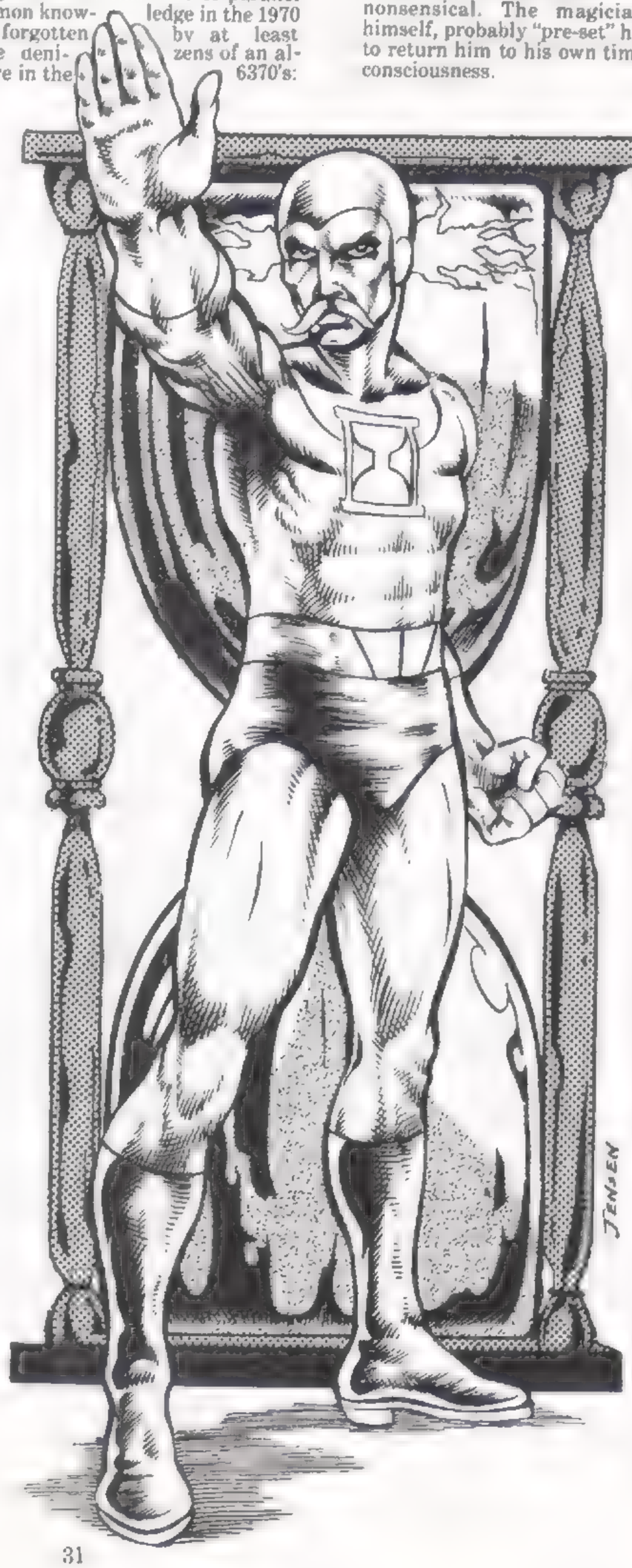
Cary Bates, *"Vandal Savage: Wanted Dead and Alive,"* **FLASH** No. 235, August 1975. While investigating the disappearances of Iris Allen and Carol Ferris, **Flash** and **Green Lantern** learn from Jay Garrick that **Vandal Savage**, thought to be destroyed in **FLASH** No. 215, was actually "halfway" vibrated into Earth-One when the fireball struck him. As a consequence, he exists as a formless ghost on Earth-Two, while he can be tangible on Earth-One. It is not possible that **Savage** could have been between dimensions and have experienced such a phenomenon: either he was at the same vibration rate as the fireball and it affected him, or he was not. What must have happened is that the fireball struck **Savage**, imbued him with immortality, and hurled him out of Earth-Two. As a side effect, the rate that corresponds to Earth-Two was frozen in **Savage**'s natural Harmonic Sequence, making it so he was unable to actualize at that rate. As soon as Earth-Two diverges to a new harmonic, this side effect will no longer be operative.

Cary Bates, *"Nowhere on the Face of Earth,"* **FLASH** No. 236, September 1975. **Doctor Fate** and Jay (**Flash**) Garrick have kidnapped Iris Allen to Earth-Two after learning that she has acquired a "pestilence" that will cause an unpredictable cataclysm when in proximity with her husband's unique super-speed aura. **Doctor Fate** casts a spell across dimensions to keep **Flash** occupied while they search for a cure. Failing to find it, **Doctor Fate** uses his magic to send Iris to her parents' era to see if 30th Century science can help her.

Cary Bates, *"The Thousand-Year Separation,"* **FLASH** No. 237, November 1975. Despite his Earth-Two friends' efforts to prevent him, **Flash** uses his Treadmill to travel to the 30th Century to look for Iris. There, he finds that his 25th Century foe, **Professor Zoom** had planted a "lethal energy flux" by means of ejecting "ultra-vibrations" at her during their last meeting in **FLASH** No. 233. Duplicating the frequency with his own vibrations, **Flash** neutralizes the energy in Iris.

Cary Bates, *"Kill Me, Flash — Faster . . . Faster!"* **FLASH** No. 246, January 1977. **Abra Kadabra** sends a pyramid to the 20th Century, which teleports **Flash** to **Kadabra**'s future reality of 6376. There he hypnotizes **Flash** into striking him with a blow that apparently disintegrates him.

Cary Bates, *"The Mad, Mad Earth of Abra Kadabra!"* **FLASH** No. 247, March 1977. Being propelled through time and space by **Flash**'s punch, **Abra Kadabra** materializes on Earth-Two 1976 but believes he is on Earth-One. Escaping from the maximum security cell he was imprisoned in after apprehended for the supposed murder of **Kadabra**, **Flash** duplicates the punch that dispatched **Kadabra** pastward and follows its radiation. In the meantime, **Kadabra** has been battling Jay Garrick, thinking that his foe escaped and is disguising himself. It seems strange that the existence of parallel Earths, common knowledge in the 1970's, has been forgotten by at least some of the denizens of an alternate future in the 6370's: perhaps the knowledge was deliberately suppressed in some intervening era. Learning that **Kadabra** placed a special sort of radiation in him that when triggered by **Flash**'s punch would generate the Chronal Displacement Inertia to propel him into the past, the two **Flashes** strike him again with a "counter-vibration" to return him to his own era. This story, like others, is misleading in that it seems to suggest that mere vibrating is enough to enable time travel, when it is actually the attaining of Chronal Displacement Inertia that can be generated by super-velocity. The "counter-vibration" explanation of sending **Kadabra** back to his own era is nonsensical. The magician, like **Flash** himself, probably "pre-set" his vibration rate to return him to his own time when he loses consciousness. ■



phenomenal relationships among dc's reality lines

by mark gruenwald art by rich bruning

The following trinity of articles deals with new facts about DC's Reality Lines brought to light since the publication of the TREATISE ON REALITY IN COMIC LITERATURE.

I

the divergent factor between earths one and two

Because Earths-One and -Two are still so phenomenally similar[1] the Divergent Factor that separated the worlds had been supposed to be of relatively recent origin. I tentatively proposed that the landing of **Kal-El**'s spaceship on Earth (in the 1920's for the Earth-Two **Superman**, the 1940's for the Earth-One) was the Divergent Factor between the two Reality Lines. I reasoned that if the Divergent Factor had occurred significantly before 1920, the number of differences that would have accumulated between the two independent Reality Lines would have been far greater than those we have seen.

How can one definitively determine Divergent Factors? If we could pinpoint the exact Atomic Instant of divergence, we would only have to examine all events that constituted that instant, and determine which was the distinguishing element between two newly-diverged realities. However, if we don't know the Atomic Instant of divergence, we must scrutinize the events of a multitude of Atomic Instants in order to determine the earliest difference in reality.

A new term is needed to describe phenomena that distinguish between two (or more) divergent Reality Lines at their Atomic Instant of divergence. Henceforth, let us call such distinguishing phenomena DIFFERENTIAL FACTORS. Once we list all the apparent Differential Factors between two Reality Lines, we can sift through them for the Divergent Factor (of which there is but **one**) i.e., the **first** Differential Factor between Reality Lines.

Recent documentation has shown an even earlier Differential Factor between Earths-One and -Two than **Kal-El**'s landing on Earth: the sinking of Atlantis. **JUSTICE LEAGUE** No. 135 reveals that although the continent of Atlantis sank into the ocean on both Reality Lines[2] on Earth-Two, "it sank below the ocean floor — with its own atmosphere — but its people survived retaining their original form, without mutating into water breathers."[3] On Earth-One, the inhabitants of the sunken Atlantis mutated into amphibians, some gaining fishtails while others retained legs. The legged Atlanteans — those of **Aquaman**'s mother's race had to build a dome to counteract the tremendous water pressure of living on the ocean floor.[4]

The sinking of Atlantis represents the earliest Differential Factor to surface to date since most scholars would place the date of the event before recorded history. How can the 1970's realities of the two divergent worlds be so phenomenally similar if they've had millenia of time to accumulate random differences?

One conjecture is that "Divergent Reality Lines will proceed in the same **general** direction, barring any far-reaching phenomenal differences." In other words, it was after Atlantis sank that reality diverged. As long as the Atlanteans stayed out of surface affairs, they would have little effect upon the course of surface reality. Thus Earth-One and -Two's histories could evolve along strikingly similar paths even though they no longer had a phenomenal dependence on one another.This conjecture would account for the general trend of history, but would not account for the high incidence of dimensional counterparts millenia later.

One must assume that despite phenomenal independence, something more than coincidence is responsible for the similarities between Earth-One's and -Two's realities. The best theory that has been postulated to date is the Reflection/Echo Effect,[5] that asserts that vibration rates transmit phenomenal data like radio waves to affect probability fields on other Reality Lines. The Reflection/Echo Effect between Earths-One and -Two must be a peculiarly strong one to account for the vast similarities in reality since the sinking of Atlantis.

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1. To judge by the great number of true and nominal counterparts between worlds.

2. The story does not specify whether the two Atlantises sank concurrently. Until demonstrated otherwise, we will assume they did.

3. E. Nelson Bridwell and Martin Pasko, *"Crisis in Eternity,"* **JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA** No. 135, October 1976, p. 8. It is interesting to note that in **JUSTICE LEAGUE** No. 65 (September 1968), the Earth-Two Atlantis is shown to be a surface island. Apparently there is more than one Atlantis on Earth-Two.

4. As revealed in **ADVENTURE** No. 280, one of the few stories to acknowledge both Atlantean races on Earth-One. **Aquaman** and **Lori Lemaris** also appear in the same story in **SUPERMAN** No. 138.

5. See S. Andrade's *"The Reflection/Echo Effect"* in this issue's Forum

II

godwar and the great disaster

If **Darkseid** had investigated the possibilities of the dimension-piercing Boom Tubes more thoroughly, he might have forseen to spread his cosmic godwar to a Parallel Earth that had no super-heroes rather than a super-populous tangent like Earth-One. However, from its very inception, the **New Genesis/Apokolips** Godwar was firmly entrenched in the Earth-One mythos.[1] Perhaps the possessors of the coveted Anti-Life Equation exist only on Earth-One. But for whatever reason, **Darkseid** took his Godwar to Earth-One.

Since Jack Kirby, the narrator of the Godwar, was unable to conclude his epic, the plot threads have been dangling until the recent revival of the **NEW GODS**. However, during the remainder of his stint at DC, Kirby laid the foundation for another tale of great proportions, one that ultimately ties into the Godwar Saga: the Great Disaster depicted in **KAMANDI**.[2] The Great Disaster is the alternate future where intelligent, anthropomorphic beasts rule, and what few human beings there are left are either mutants or barbarians.

An article by Paul Levitz in **AMAZING WORLD OF DC COMICS** No. 12 entitled *"Earth After Disaster"* attempts to piece together the jigsaw puzzle of the relationship of the Godwar to the Great Disaster. The article begins:

> **"The pivotal time will be October 1986 . . . and in that month, the future of the world will be decided. Either the path of the Great Disaster will be taken, and civilization will fall, or the path of sanity will prevail and the Legion of Super-Heroes will emerge triumphant a thousand years later . . ."**[3]

From reading this, one gets the impression that October 1986 is the **only** pivotal date for Earth-One's future, when, in reality, that is but a critical time in which **two** futures could be determined. It would have been less misleading if it had read, "The pivotal time will be October 1986 . . . and in that month, two alternate futures of Earth will come into existence."[4]

The article cites **SUPERMAN** No. 295 as the "essential crossroad" — meaning the first story acknowledging the co-existence of these two specific future tangents.[5] The **Superman** tale is commendable in its attempt to bridge continuity gaps, but two fallacies in the story[6] diminish its significance: 1) The **Guardians of the Universe** are depicted as being aware of the multi-dimensional complexity of reality, a knowledge they have not hitherto alluded to.[7] 2) The story neglected to mention a third future contemporary to the **Legion** and the Great Disaster (i.e., Central City 2970),[8] an oversight that seemingly grants validity to but the two cited future segments.

The society depicted in **OMAC** is pinpointed to be extant scant years before 1986, according to the article. As countless stories attest, the technology on Earth-One is more advanced than that on our Reality Line, so it is no real stretch of credibility to accept **Omac's** milieu as so impending.[9] **Omac's** alter ego, **Buddy Blank** is revealed to be **Kamandi's** grandfather, the man who taught the youth to survive on Earth

1. **JIMMY OLSEN** No. 133-138 pitted **Olsen** and **Superman** against **Mokkari** and **Simyan**, **Apokolipsian** geneticists. **Superman** met the young gods of **New Genesis** in **FOREVER PEOPLE** No. 1 and visited their city in **JIMMY OLSEN** No. 147. **LOIS LANE** No. 111 featured **Apokolips**-bred miniature clones of the **Justice League**. **BRAVE & BOLD** No. 112 teamed **Batman** with **Mister Miracle** of **New Genesis**. **SECRET SOCIETY OF SUPER-VILLAINS** No. 1-5 showed **Darkseid** in an abortive attempt to recruit some of Earth-One's super-villains to assist him.

2. Whether Kirby knew of a connection between the two is another question.

3. Paul Levitz, *"Earth After Disaster,"* **AMAZING WORLD OF DC COMICS** No. 12, August 1976, p. 8.

4. It also strikes one as a bit peculiar that the tangent that results in the **Legion** is characterized as "the path of sanity" when **six** World Wars occur in the thousand years between the 20th and 30th Centuries (including the two that have already occurred).

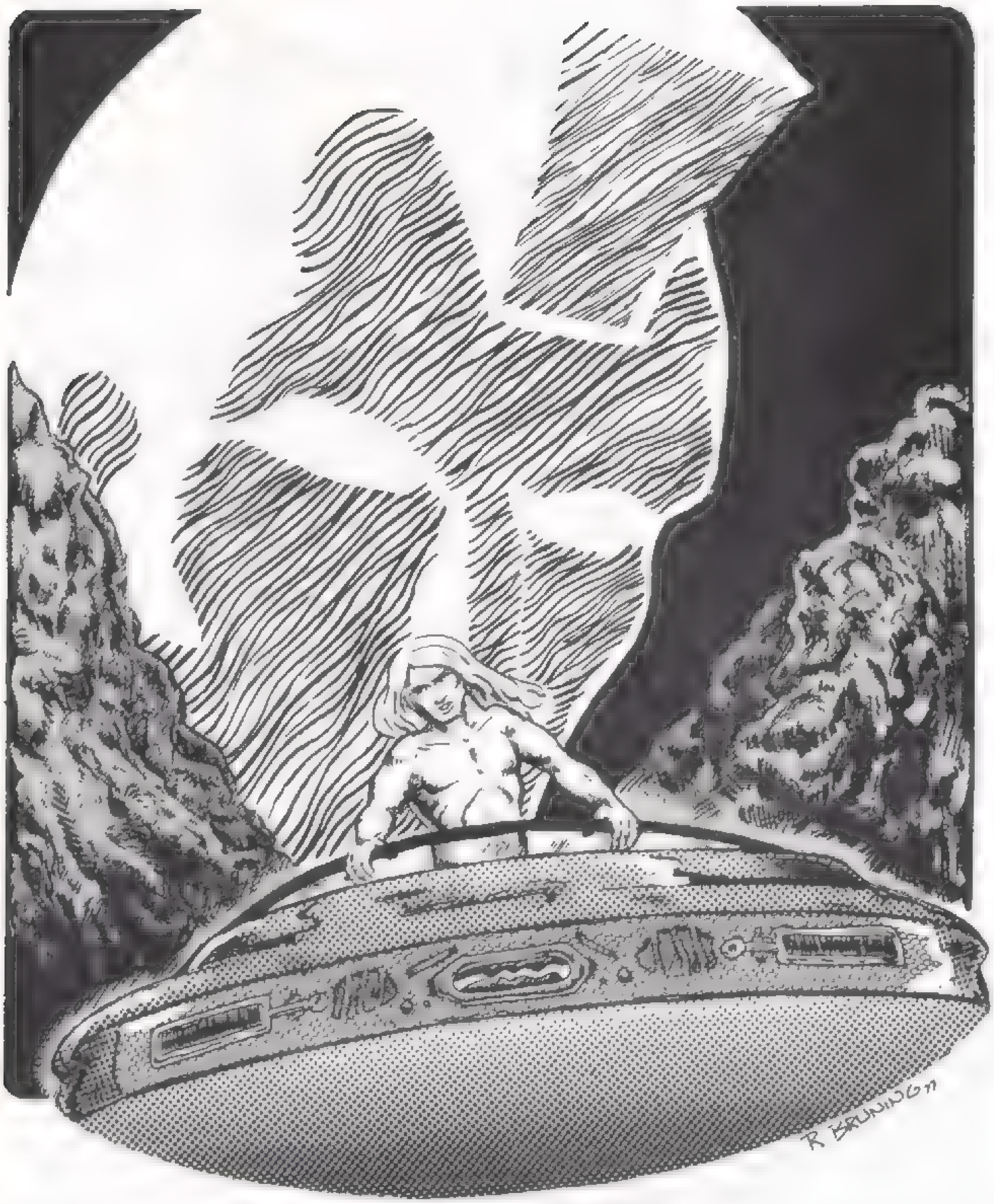
5. Elliot Maggin, "Costume, Costume, Who's Got the Costume?", **SUPERMAN** No. 295, January 1976.

6. Other than the major one cited in **TORICL** on p. 59.

7. For example, in **GREEN LANTERN** No. 51, they imply that the 58th Century future tangent that Hal Jordan visits is the only future for Earth-One.

8. Introduced in **FLASH** No. 203.

9. If **Brother Eye** is not in evidence in the DC magazines of the early 1980's, this will be an earlier Differential Factor critical to the **Kamandi/Legion** tangents than October 1986



after Disaster and was killed in **KAMANDI** No. 1.[10]

A concept, the authenticity of which Kirby would probably deny, is the intrusion of the **Olympian** pantheon in the **New Genesis/Apokolips** conflict. This complication was provided in **HERCULES UNBOUND**, courtesy of Gerry Conway. The existence of the Graeco-Roman gods on present-day Earth-One has been documented in scores of **WONDER WOMAN** stories, so speculation as to their reaction to a Great Disaster ravaging Earth is not unwarranted. However, there seems little justification for grafting them to the heart of the **New Gods** cycle.[11]

The head of the **Olympians**, **Zeus**, is said to possess the Anti-Life Equation that **Darkseid** quests for. Thus the two sets of deities — the **Olympians** and the **New Gods** — have reason to clash, but at the cost of a severe blow to credibility. First, from what has been heretofore revealed about the Anti-Life Equation, it exists in the mind of someone (or more than one) on Earth. **Zeus**, in the parallel dimension of **Olympus**, is no more a denizen of Earth than **Darkseid** is. Second, if **Zeus** truly had the Anti-Life Equation, a being of his stature would be able to fully wield it,[12] giving him the power of negation of free will, i.e., absolute mastery over sentient beings. With such power, **Zeus** could stop all the armies of **Apokolips**, **New Genesis**, and Earth — with but a single word.[13]

The **Atomic Knights** are also assigned a niche on the Earth After Disaster.[14] Definitive placement of various future worlds on their respective Reality Lines is a boon to continuity, but some of the premises to the **Atomic Knights** tales,[15] although not irreconcileable with established Great Disaster phenomena, could just as easily have been plotted in the aftermath of one of the World Wars along the **Legion's** tangent.

The chemical Cortexin, introduced in **KAMANDI** No. 16, is one of the major shapers of the Earth After Disaster reality, for it is responsible for the animals' mutated intelligence. Cortexin is also given credit for the anthropomorphosis[16] of the animals, but as revealed in a forthcoming **KAMANDI**, the Vortex in Australia also figures into it. The Vortex, a rift in the space/time continuum much like a Nexus, was caused by the malfunctioning of Boom Tubes,[17] and also figures into the disappearence of **Superman** sans costume in **KAMANDI** No. 24.[18]

The article goes on to reveal that after a decades-long war between the gods of **Olympus** and **Apokolips**, the gods of **New Genesis** enter the fray to turn the tide of battle. One wonders why the **New Genesisians** waited so long to join in battle against their hereditary enemies. The major role of the **Olympians** only serves to diminish the grandeur of the Godwar between two-races-who-once-were-one, as it was originally envisioned.

"Earth After Disaster" concludes by posing the question: Where were all the super-heroes of Earth-One when the Great Disaster occurred?[19] The question is left rhetorical, although it is possible to draw reasonable conclusions. Aware that the Vortex had something to do with **Superman's** disappearence, one might surmise that **Superman** had gone to investigate the phenomenon when it first appeared. Due to the nature of the rift, he would be unaware of the passage of time on Earth and would be effectively out of the picture perhaps for years.[20] Eventually coming out of the Vortex, he would find Earth After Disaster. Although he could travel back through time by his customary methods, **Superman** would see the futility of trying to prevent the Great Disaster from coming about. Having passed through

10. This relationship was corroborated in **KAMANDI** No. 50.

11. The amalgamation of the concepts that are outlined in *"Earth After Disaster"* should be attributed primarily to Gerry Conway, rather than Paul Levitz who merely transcribed them.

12. As opposed to the mortal Anti-Life possessors, **Sonny Sumo** and **Mister Bates**, who demonstrated minimal mastery over it.

13. It is a possibility that someone like **Ares** led **Darkseid** to believe **Zeus** had the Equation just to start a conflict.

14. Debuting in **STRANGE ADVENTURES** No. 117 and lasting fifteen installments.

15. For example, Atlantean time travelers and intelligent plants.

16. Enabling them to walk upright like men, develop opposable thumbs and prehensile fingers, and learn modesty.

17. This will be the first connection between the **New Gods** and the Great Disaster in the context of a story.

18. This information was provided me by **KAMANDI** scripter Jack Harris.

19. Jack Harris contends that the Vortex ripped a rift not only through time but also across Reality Lines. In other words, even if the Vortex is the major cause of the Great Disaster, it need not have been caused by anything indigenous to the Great Disaster Reality Line.

20. One must still propose a reason why **Superman** left his uniform behind. It's possible that he tried to contain the Vortex in his indestructible super-stretchable costume's fabric.

the Vortex where parallel realities meet, he'd have become aware that one can only create new divergences, not affect previous ones.

The other heroes of Earth-One could also have disappeared into the Vortex, although **Superman** would probably have held them back, preferring to brave it alone. Many of the super-heroes could have fought and died in World War III.[21]

It is only the presence of **Green Lantern** that we must take into special consideration since he is an operative in a cosmos-spanning band of evil-fighters, who routinely thwart invasions, a category under which the **Apokolips** threat would fall. One must propose a reason why the **Guardians of the Universe** did not dispatch the entire **Green Lantern Corps** to come to the aid of Earth. One possibility is the **Guardians** did send the Corps, it just didn't happen to be on the Reality Line that resulted in the Great Disaster.

Let us extrapolate further on the possible outcomes of the Godwar. Using October 1986 as the pivotal time of divergence, there is a tangent where...

...the **Olympians** are drawn into conflict with the **Apokolipsians** using Earth as a battlefield, the **New Genesisians** turn the tide of battle but not before Earth is left a Great Disaster.

...**Zeus** learns the Anti-Life Equation from a human being, **Darkseid** is thwarted, and the Godwar is kept off Earth.

...the **Olympians** become entangled in the **New Gods'** race war, but all the super-beings of Earth band together to force the gods to leave Earth before it is devastated.

...the super-villains fail to answer the clarion call, all the heroes die in World War III, unable to repulse the invading gods.

...the **Guardians of the Universe** send all **Green Lanterns** to Earth to help banish the gods.

...the entire **Green Lantern Corps** perishes trying to defend Earth.

...the **Guardians** decide not to risk sending any **Green Lanterns** at all.

...the **Olympians** never got involved, the **New Gods** fight it out amongst themselves and the conflict subsides when **Orion** slays his father, **Darkseid**.

Though all of these possibilities (and more) are valid, it is not likely nor advisable that more than two of these alternatives will ever be depicted if the Godwar is brought to fruition. As the events unfold, one can but hope that the Endwar Scenarios (one that brings about the Great Disaster, one that sets the stage for the **Legion**) are the most dramatic alternatives. There could be nothing more appropriate if the Anti-Life Equation were in the minds of a few ordinary Earth people, and that the fate of the world was not decided by the whims of the gods, but by the ability of the common man to cope with the knowledge that will/will not make him the master of his own destiny.

21. On **Kamandi**'s post-WWIII tangent, there is no evidence of the survival of any super-hero but **Superman**.

III
in search of the super-sons tangent

WORLD'S FINEST No. 215 forces us to address a new continuity question regarding DC's Reality Lines: On what world do the "Super-Sons" of **Superman** and **Batman** live? Here are our knowns: 1) They exist in the present day 1970's. 2) They are teen-aged, which means they must have been born in the early 1960's. 3) They do **not** exist on the Earth-One depicted in the other magazines that **Superman** and **Batman** appear in.[1]

One possible hypothesis is that they exist on a parallel Earth that diverged from Earth-One in the early 1960's. In other words, the Earth-One **Superman**, who came to Earth in the 1940's, was known as **Superboy** in the 1950's, and began his adult career in the 1960's would be one of the "Super-Son's" fathers. This timetable seems unlikely.

To have a teenaged son in the 1970's, the Earth-One **Superman** would have had to sire him in the early 1960's, near the beginning of his career. It seems highly improbable that **Superman**, dedicated as he is to his role as Earth's protector, would have decided to become a family man at such an early date.

Another possible hypothesis is that they exist on a parallel Earth that diverged from Earth-Two in the early 1960's. In other words, the Earth-Two **Superman**, who came to Earth in the 1920's and began his adult career in the 1940's, would be one of the "Super-Sons" fathers. We can eliminate this hypothesis by the observation that the **Superman** and **Batman** depicted in the "Super-Sons" tales have none of the earmarks of their Earth-Two versions, particularly in regard to apparent age.[2]

Having dismissed the two likeliest sets of candidates, the Earths -One and -Two **World's Finest** team, who then are the progenitors of the "Super-Sons?" It would seem obvious that a major divergent Earth has been neglected in the reckoning of DC's parallel Earths. Between the Earth-Two **Superman** and **Batman** whose careers began in the 1940's, and the Earth-One **Superman** and **Batman** whose careers began in the 1960's, there must have been a **Superman** and **Batman** whose careers began in the 1950's.[3] We shall refer to this parallel Earth as EARTH-E.[4]

The Earth-E **Superman** came to Earth in the 1930's, was known as **Superboy** in the 1940's, began his adult career in the 1950's, and was in his early thirties in the 1960's when his son was conceived. This timetable clicks well with the logical prerequisites for the "Super-Sons."

What more can we determine about the careers of the Earth-E **World's Finest** team? In scanning the complete runs of all the magazines where **Superman** and **Batman** regularly appeared, it is difficult to assign strict cut-off points where one Earth's heroes' adventures end and the next begins.[5] This is only to be expected since parallel Earths are a latter-day observation. Still, let us presume that the period between the retirement of the **Justice Society** (**ALL STAR** No. 57, February-March 1951) and the founding of the

1. For one thing, the sons were never as much as alluded to in any other magazine. For another, according to **WORLD'S FINEST** No. 221, Clark Kent is still a newspaper reporter — which precludes Earth-One.

2. Also the **Robin** who appeared in the "Super-Sons" tales (**WORLD'S FINEST** No. 228) is clad in his original uniform and attends college, which is a far cry from the Earth-Two **Robin**.

3. The ten year intervals are quite arbitrary. The heroes may very well have counterparts whose careers began at all sorts of odd intervals, dependent on various factors.

4. The "E" stands for both "Extraneous" and "E." Nelson Bridwell, who first postulated the existence of this "middle Earth."

5. In the late 40's and early 50's there were **SUPERMAN** involving an adult Lana Lang and/or mentioning **Superboy**. Both of these factors would indicate that despite the date the story appeared, they are not about the Earth-Two **Superman**.

Justice League (**BRAVE & BOLD** No. 28, February-March, 1960) roughly corresponds to the heyday of the Earth-E heroes. This is not to say the Earth-E counterparts had no adventures after this period, anymore than we can say that the **JSA** heroes had no adventures after the 1940's or the **JLA** heroes before 1960.[6]

It is important to note that a given recorded adventure may apply to the reality of more than one counterpart. For example, **Batman** first met the **Scarecrow** in **WORLD'S FINEST** No. 3, faced him once again in **DETECTIVE** No. 73, and heard nothing more from him. Since these stories came out in the '40's, it is obviously the Earth-Two **Batman** in question. The next appearance of the **Scarecrow**, however, is in **BATMAN** No. 189 (February, 1967) whose date would obviously indicate the Earth-One **Batman**. However, the latter adventure refers to an earlier meeting of the two. Thus, we must assume that the **Batman** of Earth-One met a **Scarecrow** in essentially the same set of circumstances as his Earth-Two counterpart did decades ago. A good number of tales must be viewed as substantially having occurred to more than one counterpart, although the details of but one of the counterparts' episodes has been afforded us.[7]

Are we to assume that **Superman** and **Batman** are the only super-heroes on Earth-E? They are not the only heroes to have recorded adventures during the '50's. Notably, **Wonder Woman**, **Green Arrow**, and **Aquaman** (the latter two having had crossover adventures with **Superman**) very probably have Earth-E counterparts.[8]

WORLD'S FINEST No. 231 indeed documents **Green Arrow**'s and **Aquaman**'s existence on the "Super-Sons" tangent, as well as **Flash**'s existence. Shortlived heroes who first appeared in the '50's are also candidates for Earth-E residency. **Captain Comet** may have originated on Earth-E, although after his twenty-year space voyage, he returned to a different Earth than the one he set out from.[9] In recognition that the Earth-E tangent would continue past its 50's heyday (just as Earth-One has continued after the 60's), perhaps some of the 60's and 70's DC heroes, who never demonstrated any connection to known Earth-One residents, live on this seldom-glimpsed Reality Line. This would account for their non-incorporation into the Earth-One mythos. The **Sea Devils**, **Enchantress**, **Animal Man**, **Bwana Beast**, **Nightmaster**, **Robby Reed**, perhaps one of the many **Plastic Man** counterparts,[10] and the latest **Sandman** may well be having regular adventures on Earth-E.

In light of the apparent discontinuation of the "Super-Sons" series as of **WORLD'S FINEST** No. 242, it does not seem likely that DC will deem it necessary to acknowledge the existence of this third major parallel Earth. It would be, after all, just one more confusing Earth, for the casual reader to contend with. However, it should be apparent to the discerning observer that the "Super-Sons" cannot have stemmed from either the Earth -One or -Two roots. Thus stands the case for the **Superman** and **Batman** of three worlds — Earth-One, Earth-Two, and Earth-E.

6. A good case could be presented that many of the 60's/70's Boltinoff-edited **BRAVE & BOLD**s and **WORLD'S FINEST**s assigned to Earth-B may actually have taken place on Earth-E.

7. Some adventures, of course, hinge upon elements that are unique to but one tangent, and it would not be in common among all counterparts.

8. Seeing as how the **Aquaman** who appeared in the 1940's (who was not the hybrid son of a human and an Atlantean) never had any crossovers with Earth-Two characters, he may have been on Earth-E all along.

9. Namely, Earth-One, according to **SECRET SOCIETY OF SUPER-VILLAINS** No. 2. The effect that faster than light travel across Phenomenal Fields has on vibration rate is still not fully documented.

10. There's the Earth-X hero who was reported as having died in World War II (see **JLA** No. 107), the divergent Earth-X hero who **didn't** die in World War II and had his own Quality comic into the 1950's, the son of **Plastic Man** who had his own magazine in the mid-60's, the Earth-B tragic hero appearing in **BRAVE & BOLD**, ad infinitum.

Tales of the "Super-Sons" appeared in **WORLD'S FINEST** No. 215, 216, 221, 222, 221, 228, 230, 231, 242.

THE SUPERMAN AND BATMAN OF THREE WORLDS

EARTH-TWO	EARTH-E	EARTH-ONE
Rocket landed on Earth in 1920, **Kal-El** was a few months old	Rocket landed on Earth by 1930, **Kal-El** was two years old	Rocket landed on Earth in 1938, **Kal-El** was two years old
Raised by Jonathan and Martha Kent; no **Superboy** career	Raised by Jonathan and Martha Kent, who passed away in 1945	Raised by Jonathan and Martha Kent, who were rejuvenated by Mr. Ray, passed away in 1955
Secretly Clark Kent, former reporter, now editor of the Metropolis **Daily Star**	Began career as **Superboy** in Smallville	Began career as Superboy in Smallville
Married Lois Lane in 1949	Secretly Clark Kent, reporter for the **Daily Planet**	Secretly Clark Kent, ex-**Planet** reporter, now TV newscaster for WGBS
No children	Married Lois Lane by 1950	Not married; No children; Active
Semi-retired from active crimefighting	Son: Clark Kent, Jr. ("Super-Son")	Cousin: **Supergirl** announced to world in 1961
Cousin: **Power Girl** announced to world 1975	Still active as a crimefighter	Kryptonite on Earth turned to iron; new kryptonite appearing
Kryptonite still prevalent on Earth	Kryptonite still prevalent on Earth	**Justice League** member
Arch-enemy **Luthor** has red hair	Arch-enemy **Luthor** is bald, older than **Superman**	
Justice Society member	No group affiliation	
Parents murdered in 1920's	Parents murdered in 1930's	Parents murdered in 1950's
Began career in 1938	Began career by 1950	Began career by 1960
Secretly Bruce Wayne, former playboy, now Gotham police commissioner	Secretly Bruce Wayne, playboy	Inspired by the **Shadow**
Married Selina Kyle (a.k.a. **Catwoman**) in 1952, she died in 1976	Brother: Thomas Wayne (deceased)	Secretly Bruce Wayne, socialite, head of Wayne Foundation
Daughter Helena Wayne (a.k.a. the **Huntress**) born 1957	Married: Kathy Kane (a.k.a. **Batwoman**) by 1950	Not married
Retired as costumed crimefighter	Son: Bruce Wayne, Jr. ("Super-Son")	No children
Partner Dick Grayson (a.k.a. **Robin**), ambassador to South Africa, still active	Still active as costumed crimefighter	Dick Grayson (a.k.a. **Robin**) left solo since 1969
Lives in Gotham City townhouse	Partner Dick Grayson (a.k.a. **Robin**), college professor, still active	Lives in penthouse in downtown Gotham City
Black bat emblem	Lives in Wayne Manor	Emblem inscribed in circle except for early years of career
Friends: Julie Madison, Linda Page, Alfred Beagle	Black bat emblem inscribed in a yellow circle late in career	Friends: **Batgirl** (Barbara Gordon), Alfred Pennyworth, Silver St. Cloud
Former **Justice Society** member	Friends: Vicki Vale, **Batgirl** (Betty Kane), **Bathound**, **Bat-Mite**, Alfred Pennyworth	**Justice League** member
	No group affiliation	

MARVEL OMNIPOTENTS OMNIVERSAL AWARENESS

BY
FRANK LOVECE

ART BY
TOM SCIACCA

From ancient mythology to the Koran to the Bible to Marvel Comics, literature is rife with the concept of omniscience. Attributed to "godly" beings whose physical, mental, and spiritual powers far outstrip those of mortals, omniscience has been defined as infinite awareness and insight. An omniscient being would possess universal knowledge — and understanding of the workings and ways of all things in the universe.

In recent times, we have learned that the parameters of the universe do not encompass all things, that there is an even greater reality. We have called this greater reality — the sum of all universes — the Omniverse. The concept of omniscience must accordingly be amplified to be synonymous with Omniversal awareness.

What would Omniversal awareness entail? Certainly insight into the multidimensional nature of existence would be at its core. But even mere mortals must have a glimmering awareness of parallel dimensions to be able to traverse between them as some are able. Omni-awareness would have to include more than a mere awareness of other realities; it would have to incorporate an understanding of the workings of the Omniverse — how dimensions diverge, the essential nature of time, and the ultimate inconsequence of one's actions on the Omniversal scale.

It will become evident that awareness is relative, that there are levels of omniscience. Nowhere has there been a more numerous pantheon of contenders for Omniversal awareness than in Marvel Comics. This article will scrutinize the so-called Marvel Omnipotents to determine their degrees of omniscience.

The Omnipotents roughly fall into two categories: the inherently omniscient (such as the **Watcher**, **Eternity**, the **Living Tribunal**) and those whose vast energy-manipulative capacities may endow omniscience (such as **Galactus**, the **Supreme Intelligence**, the **Grandmaster**, the **Stranger**, **Thanos**). Some of the Omnipotents are "mystical" in nature like **Eternity** or the **Living Tribunal**; others, like **Galactus**, **Stranger**, and the **Supreme Intelligence**, are products of science. All seem to judge themselves by paramortal standards, and justify their existence as reason unto itself. All intimate that they know something about the cosmos that we human beings are not privy to.

Perhaps the most ubiquitous of the Marvel Omnipotents is **Uatu the Watcher**. A member of a highly-evolved, star-spanning race that eons ago decided that it was nobler to observe than to interfere in the ways of the universe.[1] **Uatu** observes the Earth from the Moon's mysterious Blue Area. The **Watchers'** racial precepts of non-interference seem to be Omniversally oriented: What would be the point of interfering in the course of reality if every major event happens any number of ways? Unfortunately, Earth's **Watcher** has on occasions too numerous to cite violated his race's code of ethics, and shown himself to be Omniversally ignorant. In fact, one could present a substantial case proving that the **Watcher** who narrates the **WHAT IF?** series is not the same **Watcher** who defended Earth against **Galactus**, among other things. But that is subject matter enough for another article. We will take leave of the **Watcher** noting that the **Watcher** who was brought to trial in **CAPTAIN MARVEL** No. 39 for his transgressions is far from Omniversally aware.

Among the most awe-inspiring of the Omnipotents is **Galactus**. A gigantic humanoid in the garb of an electronic gladiator, he is the transmogrified last member of a race that succumbed to a plague.[2] He is now a universal parasite, owing to a metamorphosis which created in him a hunger for energy that is all-consuming. His existence depends on decimating worlds for their energy, and so his proclamations of being beyond such concepts as good and evil

1. **SILVER SURFER** No. 1.

2. **THOR** No. 169.

seem moot. Though he draws the analogy between his actions and a human stepping on an ant hill, the inconceivable selfishness of a creature who destroys humanoid beings much like himself makes the analogy less credible.

Galactus justifies his existence by, among other things, a code of ethics. After having been thwarted from destroying the Earth by the efforts of his former herald, the **Silver Surfer**, in collaboration with the **Fantastic Four** and the usually dispassionate **Watcher**, **Galactus** pledged to leave the Earth alone in the future. As then defined by the **Watcher**, "The promise of **Galactus** is living truth itself. His word can never be questioned."[3] Because of his subsequent actions, we can rule out **Galactus**' achievement of a high level of Omniversal awareness.

On two separate occasions after making his vow not to feed off Earth, **Galactus** returned, so much in need of energy that "though I have pledged that Earth shall ever be inviolate, the beckoning specter of grim starvation may cause so ephemeral a covenant to soon be shattered."[5] Were **Galactus** aware of other dimensions, could he not have kept his vow by journeying to some alternate Earth whose denizens he had not pledged to spare? With the power shown at **Galactus**' command, the journey should have been no more difficult than walking across the street to another diner. As one of the **Silver Surfer**'s race wondered when **Galactus** evaded their defenses by taking refuge in another dimension: "What is the power of him who can traverse the dimensions as effortlessly as he spans the galaxies?"[6]

Somewhat akin to **Galactus** is another humanoid extraterrestrial, the **Stranger**. He, like a similar, though lesser, being called the **Overmind**,[7] is a scientifically-spawned being. When the ancient world of Gigantus was doomed to destruction, the last great minds of the planet took their hardiest warrior and instilled in him the combined power and intellect of the world's countless inhabitants.[8] One might surmise that such a massive melding of brains might be enough to imbue Omniversal awareness in the Stranger. But his actions would indicate otherwise.

In **SILVER SURFER** No. 5, the **Stranger** is established as a research scientist of sorts, a cosmic collector of specimens. Owing his origin to science, he may well equate science, that explainer-of-all-things, with godhood. He speaks of his various trips to Earth as if he were a scientific judge and jury — and supposedly a supremely logical one at that. His words reveal his ostensible belief that if Earth were to be "cleansed of human life (it would be) unable to sow the germs of hatred among the distant stars."[9]

It is apparent that the **Stranger** does not realize that destroying Earth in one parallel dimension would not effect the others in the least, and while that destruction may indeed help cleanse that one universe, on the Omniversal scale, the difference would be negligible. The **Stranger** would not place very high on the Omniversal awareness scale.

The **Stranger**'s lack of omniscience is supported further by the fact that he (and possibly his long-dead race) has a dimensional counterpart he is apparently unaware of — a being named **Jakar**. Given the nature of the **Stranger**'s pursuits and his conceit, it is highly probable, had he been aware of the other's existence, that he would have attempted to collect **Jakar**, yet such a cataclysmic confrontation has not been recorded.

Jakar himself is a separate case. Hailing from a planet in another dimension, **Jakar** claimed that by his unconscious mind-power or "some other providential influence . . . (he) became aware of other Reality Lines,"[10] particularly that of Marvel-Earth. **Jakar**'s subsequent actions certainly do not justify Omniversal awareness. His scheme involved impersonating the **Stranger** and stealing children to supply the life-energy needed to revive his race. If he were truly Omniversally aware, it seems unlikely that a) he'd travel to just one Reality Line (Marvel-Earth) to steal the life-energy, b) he'd choose an Earth with such a wealth of super-protectors, c) he would not have traveled to one of the alternate Realities of his own world where his people did not succumb to a plague in order to solve his Reality's problem, and d) he would have chalked up the opening of a dimensional rift to "providence" rather than knowing about Nexuses and their causes.

It seems uncharacteristic of an Omniversally aware being to account for the occurrence of any incident through "luck," "providence," "fate," and/or "destiny." He may believe that there is some reason why things happen as they do for his own personal reality, but he would know that "luck" has nothing to do with it. When every important step has its equally likely inverse, any bit of "good luck" on one Reality Line would be countered by "bad luck" on another, rendering the concept of luck Omniversally meaningless.

Consider, then, the **Grandmaster**. He has been called a "galactic gambling addict"[11] for he channels his immeasurable energies into one pursuit: games. He is a master strategist who claims, "I live only to play the game . . . and in a thousand games . . . a thousand galaxies, I have never lost!"[12] Yet, lose he does in **AVENGERS** No. 71 when he challenges **Kang** the Conqueror and his chosen pawns, the **Avengers**.

Of the **Grandmaster**'s omnipotence there is no question: he has "complete control over time and space,"[13] enabling him to create a divergent Reality Line by traveling into the past to form the **Squadron Sinister**, and enabling him to dispatch the **Avengers** into the past to battle the team that would later take the name of the **Invaders**.

As for the **Grandmaster**'s level of omniscience, it seems likely that the **Grandmaster** is aware of at least one other parallel Earth; the **Squadron Sinister** he formed on Earth-M bear more than a coincidental likeness to the **Squadron Supreme** of Earth-Q.[14] However, his passion for gaming does not make much sense in the light of Omniversal awareness. What would be the sense of playing if you knew that every significant outcome would occur both ways?[15] Even a being able to control 99% of the factors would not be able to negate the possible future where one

3. **FANTASTIC FOUR** No. 50, p. 9.
4. **FANTASTIC FOUR** Nos. 74-77, 121-123.
5. **FANTASTIC FOUR** No. 74, p.15.
6. **SILVER SURFER** No. 1, p. 24.
7. **FANTASTIC FOUR** Nos. 113-116.
8. **FANTASTIC FOUR** No. 116, p. 31.
9. **SILVER SURFER** No. 5, p. 23.
10. **CAPTAIN AMERICA** No. 150, p. 5.
11. **GIANT-SIZE DEFENDERS** No. 3, p. 9
12. **AVENGERS** No. 69, p. 18.
13. **AVENGERS** No. 70, p. 5.
14. **AVENGERS** Nos. 85-86.
15. The **Grandmaster**'s stakes are always Diversifalian: the minimum ante he plays for is the life of a planet.

had lost. What would be the point of playing a game if you knew you would always both win and lose?

The only way one can justify Omniversal awareness for the **Grandmaster** is if one speculates that despite his proclamations, the **Grandmaster** is not into games for the gambler's thrill of winning, but only because he likes to affect reality — purposely causing divergences with his interference. In effect, this would be the opposite goal to that of the **Watchers**. However, certain evidence discredits this hypothesis. For one thing, the **Grandmaster** believes in, or at least pays lip service to, the concept of luck. Enlisting the **Defenders** to be his pawns in a game against the robotic **Prime Mover**, he states: "I need not wish you luck. I would not have selected you had I not believed your skills and powers would triumph over any caprice of fate."[16]

"Fate" here may be a poetic way of defining probability, but at the conclusion to the game, he magnanimously mentions, "Fate has spoken" after losing a coin toss with **Daredevil**.[17] While the concept of probability does have validity in terms of a single Reality Line, in terms of a set of them — where even the slightest possibility can come true at a divergence, it makes no sense. A being with a modicum of Omniversal awareness would not speak in terms of luck, fate, nor probability.

The **Supreme Intelligence**, the overlord of the humanoid alien race called the Kree, is the corporate personality/intellect of the sum total of the greatest Kree minds.[18] Appearing as a green amorphic tentacled mass with a face, the **Supreme Intelligence**'s visage floats on a monitor screen on the Kree homeworld, Hala. The **Supreme Intelligence** (also called **Supremor**) ostensibly first took notice of Earth when he sent **Ronan the Accuser** to wreak vengeance on the **Fantastic Four** for tampering with Kree Sentry 459. Years later, during the Kree/Skrull War, the **Supreme Intelligence** indicated that he knew Earth was far more than a "backwash planet," as **Ronan** believed. First, Earth lies strategically between the Kree and Skrull empires. Second, the inherent animosity mutually held for Earth stemmed from the fact that human beings were genetically capable of evolving into a higher life form than either the Kree or the Skrulls.[19]

Following the defeat of **Ronan**, **Supremor** sent a scouting expedition to Earth to put the planet under surveillance. Aboard was **Captain Mar-Vell**, greatest warrior of the Kree, whom the **Supreme Intelligence** would use as a pawn in various machinations for years to come. For the most part, **Supremor** acted as an ally to **Mar-Vell** and his Earthborn soul-mate Rick Jones,[20] but eventually his motives were revealed: with the aid of the Millenia Bloom, he intended to turn **Mar-Vell** and Jones into a "pliant soul-less thing" to be used as his ultimate weapon to destroy the hated Earth.[21]

In the light of all this, what might be the **Supreme Intelligence**'s omniscience quotient? First, like with the **Stranger**, we have a massive mind-meld. Second, we have a being who can "shred the fabric of time and space,"[22] amounting to instantaneous long-distance teleportation. Third, we have a being who can influence others' actions by communicating to them in dreams,[23] and whose mental communication is not even confined to the realm of positive matter: he was able to converse with **Captain Marvel** in the Negative Zone. Fourth, we have a being who goes through elaborate manipulations of others to carry out his schemes. Does this add up to omniscience?

There is a wealth of evidence to discredit it. It is apparent that **Supremor** is not aware of all factors in his Phenomenal Field. He states, in fact, " while events did not precisely follow my grand scenario, the end result was what I had planned."[24] Later even this end result was thwarted by **Captain Marvel**, and for the first time since its inception, the screen with the **Supreme Intelligence**'s image went blank. Moreover, not only do **Supremor**'s failings diminish his omniscience, the very fact that he would place so much importance on controlling the events of one Reality Line would indicate that he considers it the prime if not only Reality.

A few Earth beings have made it into the ranks of the Marvel Omnipotents, and need also be considered. Such a being is the **High Evolutionary**, a human scientist who invented a genetic accelerator and conducted such experiments as transforming animals into

16. **GIANT-SIZE DEFENDERS** No. 3, p. 11.
17. **Ibid.**, p. 44.
18. **AVENGERS** No. 96, p. 19.
19. It is probable that the **Supreme Intelligence** is aware of this fact through genetic analysis rather than time travel or future prediction — attributes he has never displayed. Indeed, he speaks of mankind's evolution as occurring "in some distant, **unglimpsed** future." (**AVENGERS** No. 97, p. 18.)
20. For one thing, he helped Jones unleash the power to bring the Kree/Skrull War to a truce in **AVENGERS** No. 97.
21. **CAPTAIN MARVEL** No. 46, p. 22.
22. **AVENGERS** No. 97, p. 19.
23. Whether this is done by direct mental stimulation of the sleeping mind or by entering the Dimension of Dreams, the realm that the mystical being **Nightmare** lives, is a matter of debate. The **Supreme Intelligence** first utilizes this power on Earth beings in **FANTASTIC FOUR** No. 65.
24. **CAPTAIN MARVEL** No. 46, p. 22.

"New Men," and his most ambitious project, the life-size replication of the Earth on the far side of the sun called Counter-Earth.[24] Despite the **High Evolutionary**'s vast powers, he does not appear to be Omniversally aware. Why, for instance, would he go to the monumental effort of forming a planet from scratch to conduct his experiments when it would have been far easier to travel to an unpopulated Earth-like dimension? Even more pointedly,why would he have placed Counter-Earth "one second out of sync" with Marvel-Earth so that it might escape detection,[25] if he had known that there undoubtedly exists an Earth parallel to Earth-M whose time-flow is one second out of sync? The **High Evolutionary** does not seem to be too heavy a contender for Omniversal awareness .

Sise-Neg was also an Earth scientist, although he was born some centuries into Earth-M's future. Traveling backward in time to siphon the finite amount of ambient magic (which exists as energy in the Marvel multiverse), he eventually collected it all and arrived at the "Dawn of Time." As he put it to **Dr. Strange** and **Baron Mordo** : "And what is another term for an all-powerful being at the dawn of Creation? It is **God**!" [27] The man, **Sise-Neg**, supposedly became The **God, Genesis**, and rather than re-creating the universe in his own image as he originally intended, he decides, "Man is imperfect — but he is this dimension's closest approximation of perfection! I cannot improve upon that, so I shall recreate the universe — exactly as it was before!"[28]

Here, at least one divergent Earth was created — a world where **Sise-Neg**, though existing, did **not** journey to the beginning of time and create the Earth. One might assume that becoming **God** would automatically entitle one to Omniversal awareness. However, there is no textual evidence to indicate whether **Sise-Neg** is aware of the parallel Earths that sprang-into-being/had-always-existed despite his journey to Genesis. It does not seem probable that **Sise-Neg**, in his godly conceit, considered that something caused the existence of the universe from which his Creation originally diverged. Still, due to the above factors, the being who was once **Sise-Neg** may be the most Omniversally aware human being to yet exist.

Let us now consider **Thanos**, once overlord of the Saturnian moon Titan, nephew of **Zeus**, and presently champion of **Death** and the dark forces in the universe. Using the Earth-made Cosmic Cube to grant him boundless power, **Thanos** became one with the personification of **Death** as a woman[29] and apparently dissipated into the void. Later it was learned that he had merely reverted to his corporeal form, and soon began to plot anew.[30] He allied himself with **Adam Warlock** in order to vanquish **Warlock**'s evil future counterpart, the **Magus**, and after the two had succeeded in preventing **Warlock** from becoming the **Magus** in their Reality,[31] **Thanos** was free to resume his machinations without opposition. **Thanos'** goal had progressed from absolute mastery of the universe to total stellar genocide: he sought to destroy the universe.

How might **Thanos'** powers and plans indicate Omniversal awareness? First, **Thanos** invented a time machine which enabled him to "observe and classify every aspect of (**Warlock's**) present and future life."[32] It also enabled him to journey to a future Reality to pluck the child **Gamora**, last surviving member of a race slaughtered by the **Magus'** Grand Inquisitors, and draft her into service. Reaching womanhood, **Gamora** was bestowed with abilities to rival **Warlock**'s, and **Thanos** whetted her appetite for vengeance by allowing her to kill the soldiers who murdered her people years before the genocide would occur. This would indicate some awareness by **Thanos** of alternate Realities: even though **Gamora** killed certain soldiers on one Reality Line, in another, they would still be present for her race's extinction, setting in motion those events that brought **Gamora** to **Thanos** in the first place. **Thanos** states, "I had hoped this would be a major-enough rift in the **Magus'** continuous reality to allow **Gamora** to assassinate (him)."[33]

So what can be said of **Thanos**, who mated with **Death**, who attained godhood via the genie-like Cosmic Cube, who strides time's corridors more methodically than even the time-master **Kang**, who deliberately introduces Divergent Factors for their disruptive effects, and finally, whose one goal is total stellar genocide? One could say that he seems to possess quite a high degree of Omniversal awareness. Why then would he seek the destruction of the universe, rather than a harmless pursuit like the **Watcher**'s observations, the **Grandmaster's** games? Perhaps his unconscionable purpose is tempered by

25. **MARVEL PREMIERE** No. 1.
26 **WARLOCK** No. 1
27. **MARVEL PREMIERE** No. 13, p. 32.
28. **MARVEL PREMIERE** No. 14, p. 31.
29. **CAPTAIN MARVEL** No. 33
30. **WARLOCK** No. 10
31 **WARLOCK** No. 11
32 **WARLOCK** No. 10, p. 23
33 **Ibid.**, p. 26

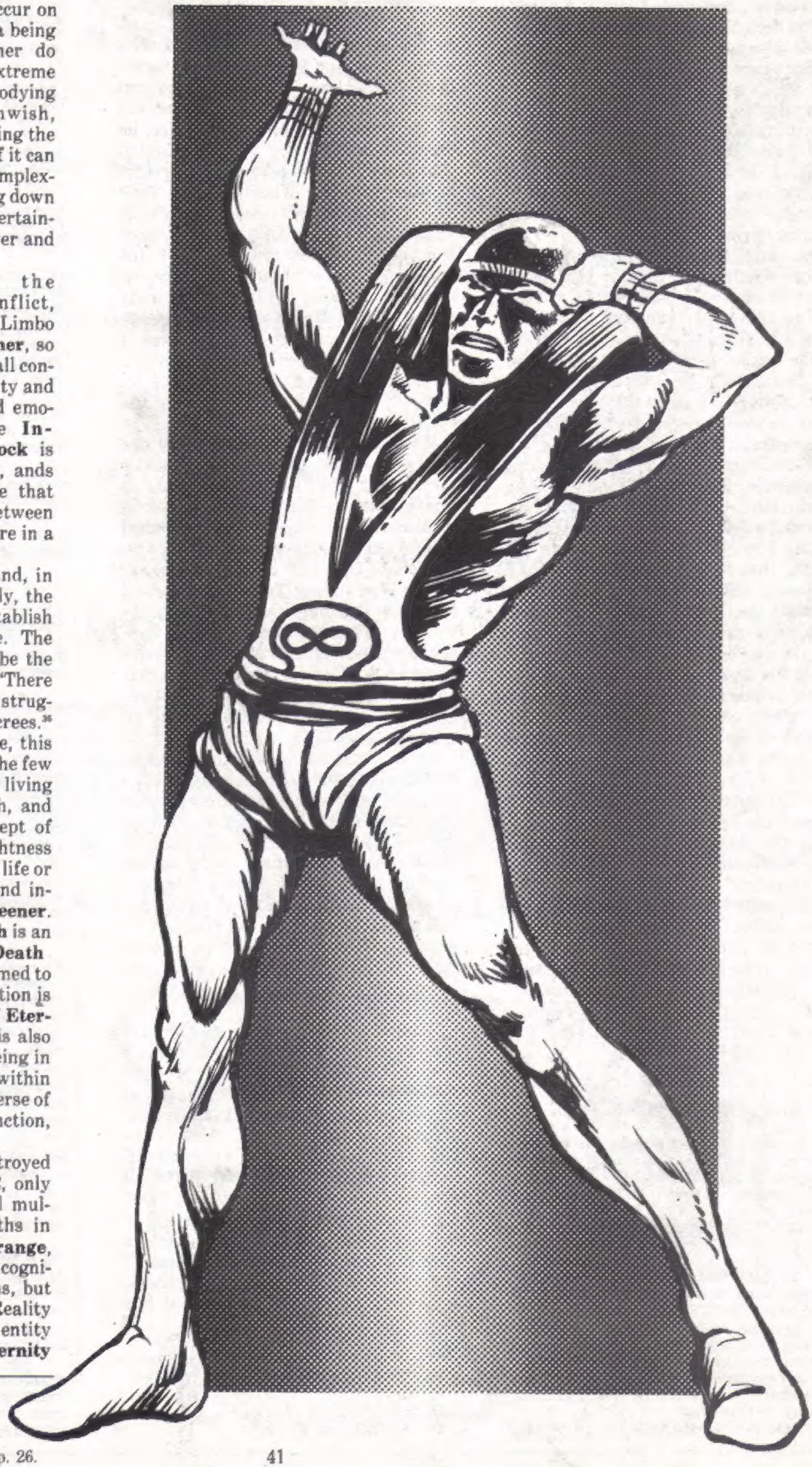
the Omniversal concept that no matter what he does, it doesn't matter, because the inverse will automatically occur on another Reality. Knowing such, a being like **Thanos** could opt to either do nothing or to devise the most extreme test of divergence possible. Embodying both powerlust and a deathwish, perhaps **Thanos** seeks to die, taking the universe with him — just to see if it can be done. In the ever-increasing complexity of the Omniverse, the shutting down of an entire Reality Line would certainly be a tribute to one being's power and ingenuity.

At the climax of the **Magus/Thanos/Warlock** conflict, **Warlock** found himself in a Limbo presided over by the **In-Betweener**, so called because he "walks betwixt all concepts such as life and death, reality and illusion, good and evil, logic and emotion, God and man."[34] The **In-Betweener** explains that **Warlock** is the sole cause for his existence, ands that it is his purpose to "make that which is to come (the transition between **Warlock** and the **Magus**) transpire in a more orderly fashion."[35]

Striding between concepts found, in one way or another, Omniversally, the **In-Betweener** would seem to establish himself as Omniversally aware. The root of his being would seem to be the balance between life and death: "There has been, and always should be a struggle between life and death," he decrees.[36] In all universes of the Omniverse, this struggle would seem to be one of the few constants. There is omnipresently living matter or the possibility of such, and there is omnipresently the concept of life-termination. Moreover, no rightness or wrongness is ascribed to either life or death. These poles simply are, and in-between them exists the **In-Betweener**.

In the Marvel multiverse, **Death** is an incarnate entity. The visage of **Death** as a conquering skull once proclaimed to **Dr. Strange**: "The whole of Creation is the sum of **Death** and **Eternity**."[37] **Eternity**, the counterpart of **Death**, is also incarnate. **Eternity** is a mystic being in the shape of a gigantic man, within whose outline rests an entire universe of celestial bodies. As to his function, **Eternity** like **Death**, merely *is*.

When the planet Earth was destroyed in **DOCTOR STRANGE** No. 12, only one parallel Earth in the Marvel multiverse died; other parallel Earths in other universes lived on. **Dr. Strange**, not being Omniversally aware, is cognizant of other mystical dimensions, but not of divergences in his own Reality Line. In one such dimension, the entity known as **Nightmare** captured **Eternity**



34. **WARLOCK** No. 11, p. 16.
35. **Ibid.**, p. 17.
36. **Ibid.**
37. **DOCTOR STRANGE** No. 4, p. 26.

by tapping the dream-power of the denizens of Earth. Put asleep by **Nightmare**, **Eternity** dreamed of Earth's destruction, and since Earth is a planet within the universe that makes up **Eternity**'s form, his dreams became the reality of the worlds within him. Earth was truly destroyed.

In the Dimension of Dreams, **Eternity** addresses **Dr. Strange**: "I am **Eternity**. I am life beyond limits — beyond death — beyond end. In short, I am what you see before you: the universe!"[38] **Eternity**, then, is the embodiment of a sentient, living, universe.

Dr. Strange pleads with him to restore Earth on the Reality Line from which he came. **Eternity** replies: "I cannot do that . . . I cannot tamper with what has already occurred. The stress on the fragile fabric of reality would be too great!"[39] By this we can conclude that although **Eternity** may possess infinite universal awareness, he is not Omniversally aware. For one thing, he does not appear to be aware of the divergences in reality of the worlds within him: he is not aware that he caused the death of the Earth on but one Reality Line. **Eternity** is correct in asserting that he cannot undo what has happened, but when he is convinced to recreate the Earth, exactly as it had been, he betrays his non-awareness that just as he had created a divergence where his dream had not destroyed the Earth, he was also creating a divergence where he was not coerced into recreating an Earth.

It is the **Ancient One**, discorporated mentor of **Dr. Strange**, who struggles with **Eternity** and convinces him to recreate the Earth. After **Eternity** complies, the **Ancient One** merges with him, reinforcing **Eternity**'s claim to be the universe.[40]

If **Eternity** is an entire universe, if he is responsible for the creation and evolution of all things within himself as he claims,[41] is he not then the **God**?[42] **Eternity** proclaims: "I, and my brother **Death**, comprise all of your reality, mystic. Neither he nor I am **God**, for **God** rules all Realities."[43]

Before we explore the implications of that pronouncement, let us examine one last Omnipotent, the three-visaged **Living Tribunal**. As put by that entity himself, "All the dimensions, each nebulous netherworld which exists either in time or space, either as matter or as fathomless void, such were given over into the eternal, deathless keeping of the **Living Tribunal**."[44] Further, he describes a "celestial design" deigning that there is but one Sorceror Supreme in each universe. What design is this? The **Tribunal** gives these indications: "Since the first striking of the clock of time, it has been ordained that the mystic powers should be kept in everlasting equilibrium,"[45] seemingly akin to the **In-Betweener**'s statements about the balance between the forces of life and death. Secondly, he speaks of a threat to "the very framework of infinity,"[46] this framework implying the Omniverse itself!

While **Eternity** is merely life in one universe, the **Living Tribunal**'s jurisdiction seems to cut across all dimensions, all universes. Wherever it is from which the **Living Tribunal** observes the Omniverse is probably also the Limbo in which the **In-Betweener** dwells. The **Living Tribunal** may well be the most Omniversally aware entity we have yet encountered. But the **Living Tribunal** is a preserver, a maintainer, not a Creator. He mentions that all the dimensions were put in his keeping, but he does not venture to say by whom.

Both **Eternity** and the **Living Tribunal**, as unimaginably powerful as they are, both allude to a being greater than themselves. What is their conception of **God**? When **Eternity** asserts "**God** rules all realities," is he saying that the Omniverse is theistic? Our understanding of the nature of divergence will not let us preclude the existence of universes that came about by chance rather than design.[47] Can the Omniverse be theistic even if its participating universes are not?

What if what **Eternity** means by his statement that "**God** rules all Realities," is that "**God** *is* all Realities."? What if the Omniverse is a sentient organism of universes like **Eternity** is a sentient organism of one universe? What if the Omniverse is composed of a myriad different **Eternities**? Conversely, what if **Eternity** is a cell in the entity of **God**?

The avenues of metaphysical speculation are endless, and of course, have no absolute answers. That is, until we all obtain total Omniversal awareness, something no Marvel Omnipotent has even done. ■

38. **DOCTOR STRANGE** No. 13, p. 16.
39. **Ibid.**, p. 22.
40. Since the **Ancient One** is "one with the universe," it limits his level of Omniversal awareness to that of **Eternity**'s. If he is one with **Eternity**, he can't know more than **Eternity** knows.
41. **DOCTOR STRANGE** No. 13, p. 17.
42. This is the second version of Genesis that the Marvel multiverse has to contend with. Perhaps **Eternity** created the first Creation which was destroyed in **DOCTOR STRANGE** No. 12. Then he created the second Creation which eventually produced **Sise-neg**, who went back to create his own identical creation. The question becomes: Who is responsible for the Creation of the Marvel-Earth from which **Dr. Strange** hails: **Eternity** or **Sise-Neg**?
43. **DOCTOR STRANGE** No. 13, p. 17.
44. **STRANGE TALES** No. 158, p. 3.
45. **Ibid.**, p. 3.
46. **Ibid.**, p. 3.
47. **TORICL**, pp. 63-64.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Eternity
DR. STRANGE 4,10,11,13
STRANGE TALES (DR. STRANGE) 138, 146,172,182

Galactus
FANTASTIC FOUR 48-50,74-77,121-123, 172-175
SILVER SURFER 1
THOR 134,160-162,167-169,225,228

Grandmaster
AVENGERS 69,71
DEFENDERS GIANT-SIZE 3

High Evolutionary
AVENGERS GIANT-SIZE 1
FANTASTIC FOUR 172-175
HULK 149,158
MARVEL PREMIERE (WARLOCK) 1-2
TALES TO ASTONISH (HULK) 94-96
THOR 134-135

In-Betweener
DR. STRANGE 26-28
WARLOCK 11

Jakar
CAPTAIN AMERICA 149-150

Living Tribunal
STRANGE TALES (DR. STRANGE) 157-160, 163

Overmind
FANTASTIC FOUR 113-116

Sise-Neg
MARVEL PREMIERE (DR. STRANGE) 13-14

Stranger
CAPTAIN MARVEL 42
CHAMPIONS 12
FANTASTIC FOUR 116
MARVEL TEAM-UP 55
SILVER SURFER 5
TALES TO ASTONISH (HULK) 89-91
THOR 178
X-MEN 11,18

Supreme Intelligence
AVENGERS 89,95-97,124
CAPTAIN MARVEL 16-17,35,41,43-46
FANTASTIC FOUR 65

Thanos
AVENGERS 118,125
AVENGERS ANNUAL 7
CAPTAIN MARVEL 25-33
DAREDEVIL 105,107
IRON MAN 55
LOGAN'S RUN 7
MARVEL FEATURE (THING) 2
MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE ANNUAL 2
WARLOCK 9-11,15

Watcher
AVENGERS 14,101,118
AVENGERS ANNUAL 2
CAPTAIN MARVEL 36-40
FANTASTIC FOUR 13,20,29,48-50,60, 72,113-116,188
FANTASTIC FOUR ANNUAL 3,11
FANTASTIC FOUR GIANT-SIZE 2
MARVEL TEAM-UP 7
MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE 20
MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE ANNUAL 1
SILVER SURFER (TALES OF THE WATCHER) 1-7
STRANGE TALES (HUMAN TORCH) 134
TALES TO ASTONISH (HULK) 73-75
THOR 165,168-169
WHAT IF 1-7

NEXT ISSUE

THE LIVES AND TIMES OF DR. DOOM

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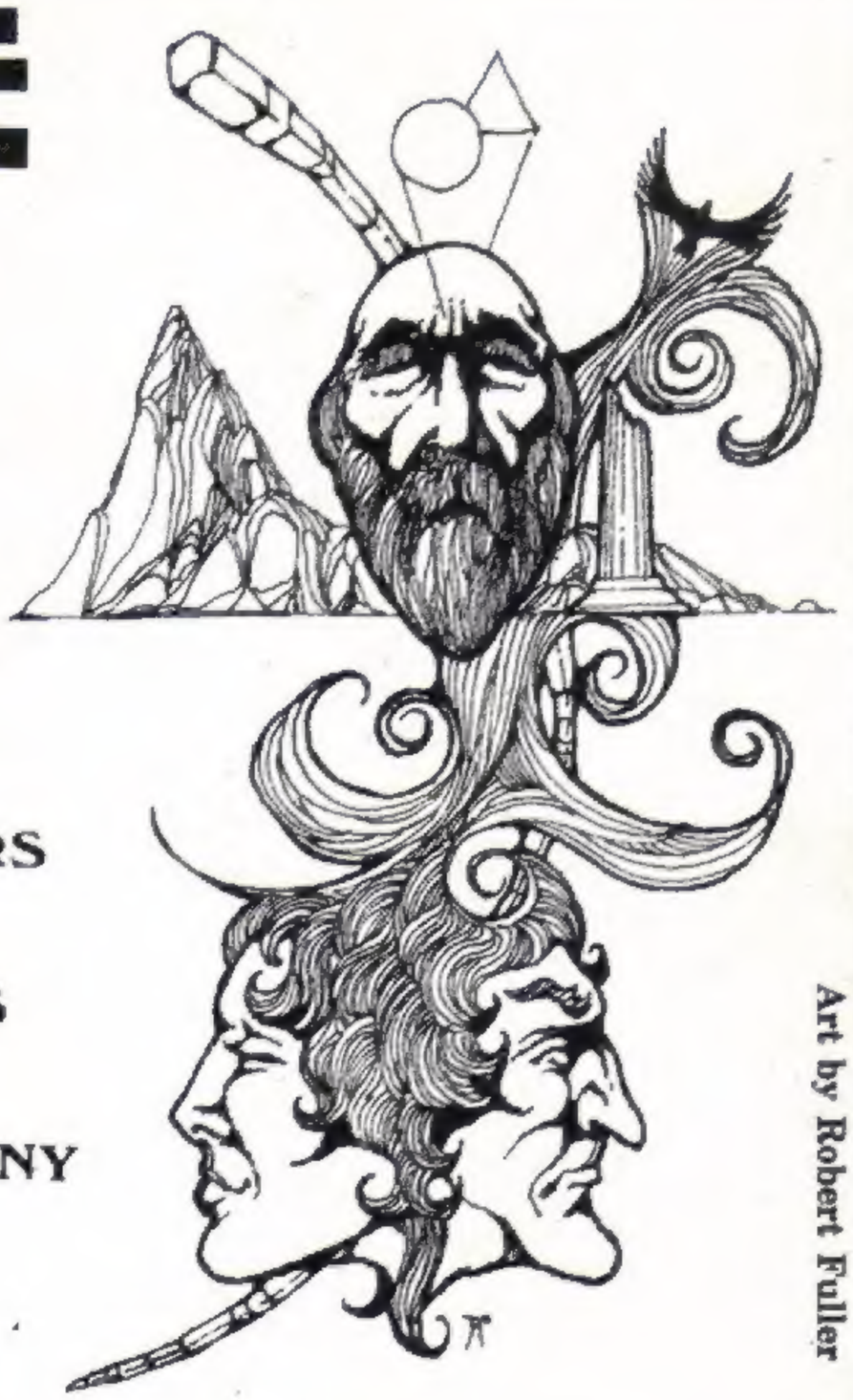

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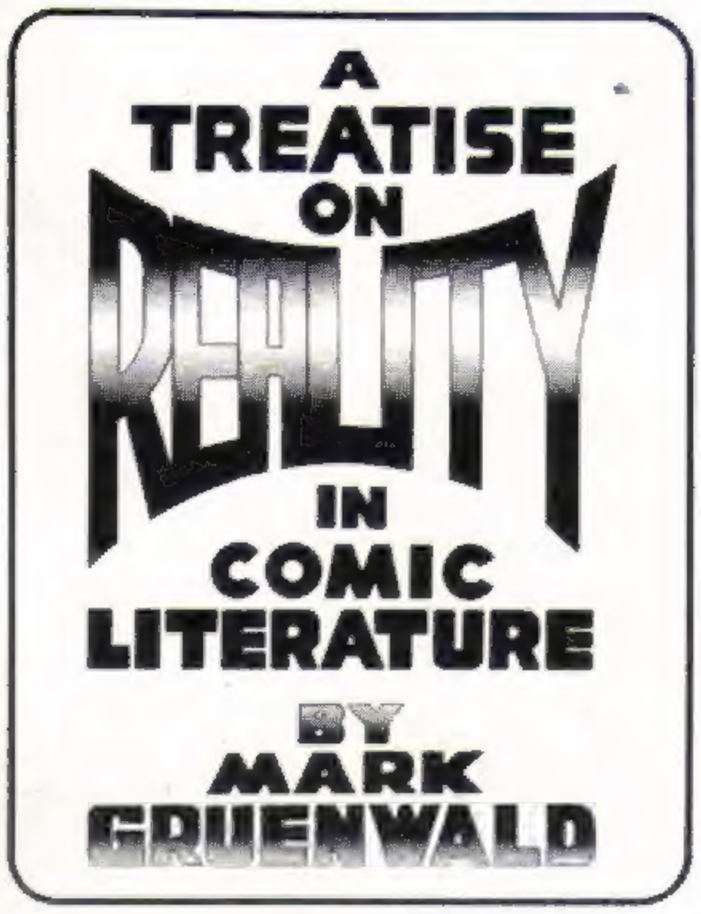

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